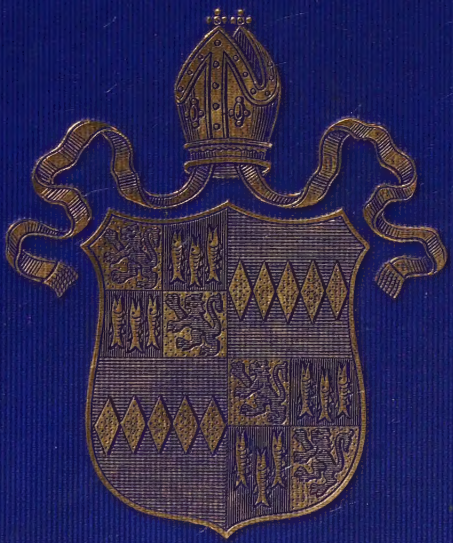

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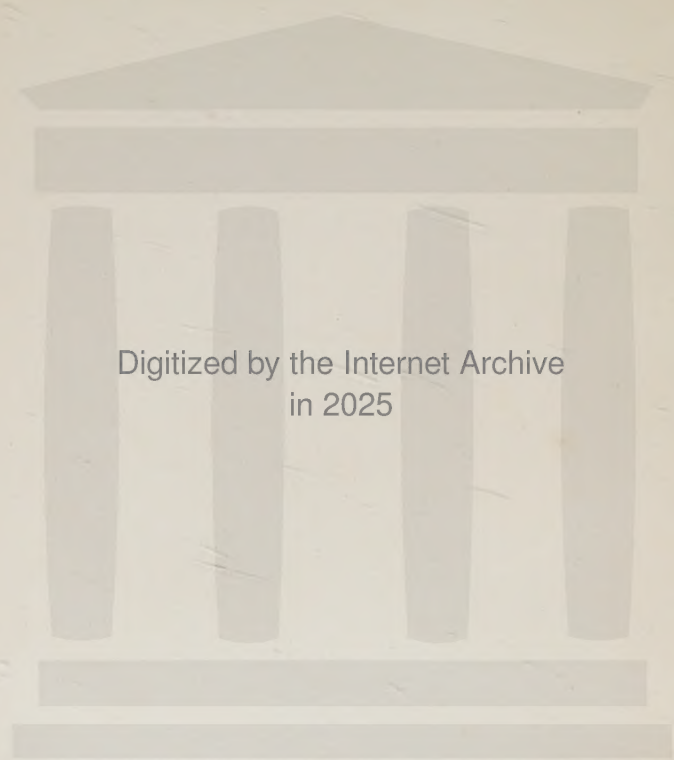
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PERCY: PRELATE AND POET

Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds

Engraved by H. Dickinson
Feb 12 1775

Thomas Percy S.T.P.

DECANUS CARLIOLENSIS 1778

PERCY: PRELATE AND POET

BY

ALICE C. C. GAUSSEN

AUTHOR OF 'A LATER PEPYS,' AND 'A WOMAN OF WIT AND WISDOM'

WITH A PREFACE BY SIR GEORGE DOUGLAS, BART.
AND 8 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1908

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PREFACE

THERE are few modern books to which the much-abused epithet of 'epoch-making' is more applicable than to Bishop Percy's 'Reliques.' For while, on the one hand, that famous work gave the impulse to a whole world of research into native ballad-poetry, it is, on the other hand, acknowledged to have been the main literary influence in the great poetic revival which dates from the publication of the 'Lyrical Ballads' in 1798. Thus Wordsworth assigns not only the highest importance to Percy's labours, but the highest praise to Percy's taste;[1] Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' is the very apotheosis of ballad-poetry, and it is seldom indeed that we are privileged to see the development of genius in such active operation as in the scene where the boy Walter Scott becomes lost in a day-dream over the book which, as he himself stated in later life, he had read oftener and with more enthusiasm than any other.

[1] Nowell Smith's Edition of Wordsworth's Poems, 1908, vol. iii. p. 511.

The importance of the 'Reliques' being then so great, it is certainly remarkable that no authoritative Life of their compiler has before now been given to the world, and Miss Alice Gaussen has earned the thanks of the public in supplying this want, and in bringing to bear upon the illustration of her subject a mass of material, of which the Colchester Papers and those of the Meade family are hitherto unpublished.

To students of human nature, not the least piquant feature of the book will be the contrast therein revealed between the character of the compilation and that of the compiler. That the 'Reliques' should have emanated from the Rectory of Easton Maudit, that the worldly-wise and courtier-like Percy should have braved the contempt of Johnson, and have shown in Wordsworth's phrase the 'resolution to follow his genius into regions of true simplicity and genuine pathos,' remains a standing puzzle of authorship. Perhaps it is best elucidated by the theory that an extreme cleverness served the urbane Prelate no less well in his literary than in his worldly affairs.

GEORGE DOUGLAS.

September 1908.

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PERCY, PRELATE AND POET

CHAPTER I

1729–1753

If it be true that the quality of our native air in some manner influences our characters and constitutions, Thomas Percy was fortunate in first drawing breath in the bright and healthy atmosphere of Bridgnorth in Shropshire. At the time of his birth the air of this quiet country town was said to equal that of Montpelier itself, then the unrivalled playground and health resort of the English people. Another century had still to elapse before Lord Brougham made known to them the charms of the Riviera.

In Bridgnorth all constitutions could be suited, for if the air of the upper part of the town proved too fine and sharp, relief might be found by removing to the lower part, and there the feeble folk might dwell secure, until old age in its natural course carried them to the grave. The high town lies upon the western bank of the river Severn, and rises gradually to a considerable height. The ascent begins from the foot of the bridge, where a flight of steps cut deep in the rock forms a passage that to Thomas Percy's youthful fancy appeared like the ascent of 'Mount Calvary in Jerusalem.' On the south side of this passage opened a large cave in

the rock, which was the repository of excellent beer. Within stood a tun containing more than five hogsheads, and the entrance was guarded by a lion rampant carved in stone. Perhaps to this early impression may be traced the tradition of the 'Dragon of Wantley' and the valiant 'Moor of Moorhill.' The den of the dragon was described as a beautiful and romantic feature amid a number of picturesque landscapes, and the form of the cavern cut in the rock resembled a wine or ale cellar.

The town of Bridgnorth had suffered severely during the civil wars. The Royalist Governor of the Castle, Sir Lewis Kirk, bombarded St. Leonard's Church, which had been converted by the Roundheads into a temporary powder magazine. A fire naturally resulted that consumed the college, almshouses, and the greater part of the high town. Richard Baxter, the incumbent of the parish, wavered somewhat in his adherence to either faction, not like the Vicar of Bray, from motives of policy, but from a desire, if possible, to unite two duties, at that moment apparently incompatible, to serve God and honour the King. On leaving the town he shook the dust from his feet, and declared that the hearts of its inhabitants were harder than the rock on which their town was built. Nevertheless, he dedicated his famous book, 'the Saint's Rest,' in 1654, to his 'dearly beloved friends, the inhabitants of Bridgnorth.' Probably he wished to point them to that eternal rest, of which he had failed to find even the earthly semblance in their distracted town. At length, after a troubled life of over ninety years, having suffered many things at the hands of Judge Jeffreys and others, and heartily weary of both factions, the good old man lay dying. Some of his puritanical friends who stood

round him rather officiously reminded him that he was going where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' 'Aye, aye,' answered old Richard Baxter with a smile, 'and I am going where the *good* cease from troubling too.'

Though Cromwell confidently offered himself as a target to the indifferent marksmen of Bridgnorth, and had shown his contempt by riding leisurely within 'two pistol shots' of their fire, the Puritans were not satisfied with the partial success of their attempt on the town, and published a tract entitled 'The Burning Bush not Consumed.'

One of the few old houses that survived both fire and shot stands at the bottom of a street called the Cartway, which in olden days formed the principal entrance to the town. It is a large and stately mansion, conspicuous among the surrounding dwellings by reason of its size and picturesque appearance. It is constructed of solid beams of carved oak, interspersed with masonry and ornamented with pointed gables.

This house was built in the latter end of the sixteenth century, as the following inscription in the entrance-hall tells us:

'Except the Lord BVILD the OWSE,
the Labourers thereof evail nothing.
Erected by R. For. 1580.'

Part of an ancient oak screen remains with the same date, and the letters R. F. carved on it.

The old mansion was built by Richard Forester, sometimes spelt Forster and Foster. Antony Foster, mentioned in 'Kenilworth' by Sir Walter Scott, bore the arms of the Foresters, and belonged no doubt to the same family.

In this fine old house on April 13, 1729, two years after the accession of George II., Thomas Percy was born. He was baptized at St. Leonard's Church on the 29th of the same month.

Tastes as well as refinement come, as Napoleon said, *avec les langes*, and from his birthplace, which was full of historic associations, Percy acquired his love of antiquarian research. In the same manner 'The Vision of Piers the Ploughman,' written in the fourteenth century by William Langland, an inhabitant of the neighbourhood, had no doubt a wonderful effect on his mind and inspired him with the poetic spirit.

Thomas Percy claimed descent from Ralph Percy, Earl of Worcester, a younger son of Henry Percy, second Earl of Northumberland. As the Percy family had supported the losing side in the Wars of the Roses, they were involved in the ruin that befell the House of Lancaster, consequently the descendants of their younger branches sank into oblivion. At the time of the Restoration Thomas Percy's family had in and about Worcester a considerable estate, chiefly in houses. Dr. Nash, in his 'History of Worcestershire,' notes that he has examined the proofs of all the particulars relating to this 'Worcestershire branch of the Percy family,' and Boswell in his 'Life of Johnson' tells us that, 'both as a lawyer accustomed to the consideration of evidence, and as a genealogist versed in the study of pedigrees,' he was satisfied. It has been objected that, supposing Thomas Percy's claim had been capable of proof, he would undoubtedly, as the eldest male descendant of the Percys, have been the rightful Earl of Northumberland. But this claim he would never have advanced against his life-long friends and patrons, Sir Hugh Smithson, created first Duke of

Northumberland, and Lady Elizabeth Seymour, his wife, who through her grandmother inherited the broad lands of the Percys. They always acknowledged him as a kinsman.

The branch of the family from which Thomas Percy was descended sometimes spelt the name Piercy, and sought wealth in Bridgnorth; the part they took in the public affairs of that town shows that they held a prominent position there, and were much respected. There is no doubt that Thomas Percy's grandfather, who was enrolled a Burgess of the Borough in 1695, was engaged in trade as a grocer, thereby maintaining himself in a manner that in those days was often adopted by the younger branches of old families. It has been asserted that his father continued the business, but of this we have no certain information. In any case the vicissitudes of his ancestors were not more marked than those of his patron, the first Duke of Northumberland, for the founder of the Smithson family had only a few years previously, as a haberdasher of humble birth, amassed a fortune by his shop in Cheapside. In this business he had served as apprentice to Ralph and William Robinson, who purchased the estates of Rokeby and Brignal, and were ancestors of the Marquis of Ripon and Mrs. Montagu (Queen of the Bluestockings).

By his laborious genealogical researches Thomas Percy not only proved his descent from the ancient Earls of Northumberland, but also furnished the Percy family with evidence, unobscured by the mists of antiquity, proving their direct descent from the Emperor Charlemagne. Such a pedigree might, indeed, make even the House of Bourbon regret its incapacity of tracing its descent beyond the upstart butcher, Hugh Capet.

When Sir Walter Scott wrote on his dog Percy's tomb :

'Cy Gist li preux Percie,'

he remembered how easily genealogists might be misled, and wondered if some future antiquaries would debate which hero of the House of Northumberland had left his bones in Teviotdale.

It is, however, certain that, whatever Thomas Percy's pedigree may have been, his great culture and attainments place him in the highest position; even Dr. Johnson declared him to be a man out of whose company he never went without having learnt something.

One of our Hanoverian monarchs, with the sense of humour occasionally displayed by his race, when creating a new peer, exclaimed, 'I can make him a peer, but I cannot make him a gentleman.' Though himself the 'fountain of honour,' his Majesty was aware that there existed a yet more subtle distinction that it was not in his power to grant, and like his predecessor, King Canute, he not only recognised his limitations, but called the attention of his courtiers to the fact.

Thomas Percy was educated at the Grammar School at Bridgnorth, but from a paper discovered among his possessions it seems probable that he was previously at Oldbury School in the same neighbourhood. This establishment was conducted on the same sound principles of economy and obtrusive generosity as that of the worthy Mr. Squeers of Dotheboys Hall.

The prospectus and terms of board state :

'The young gentlemen are seldom taken in under four years of age, or kept there after eight, at which

time it is to be supposed they may be fit for a grammar school. A writing master attends three times a week to teach those whose friends are desirous of their learning to write. There *is* prayers twice a day, and constant attendance at church. They have twopence a week allowed to each, which is not charged to their friends, as it is generally expended on forfeits, or spent under such regulations as may not endanger their health.

	£	s.	d.
Entrance paid with each scholar . . .	1	1	0
Board and schooling a year	12	12	0
Washing and mending	2	2	0

To the housekeeper what you please. Some have given a crown, and a few half a guinea.'

Thomas Percy was also under the tuition of the Rev. Samuel Lea, M.A., headmaster of Newport School in Shropshire, who was at that time in 'high reputation as a very diligent good teacher.' Many years before he had refused to admit a then unknown lad, one Samuel Johnson, as a scholar and assistant. Dr. Lea lived long enough to regret his decision, and Dr. Johnson had the gratification of hearing that at a very advanced age he always declared it to be one of the most memorable events of his life that he was '*very near* having that great man for his scholar.'

In 1746, when Thomas Percy was in his eighteenth year, he obtained one of the Careswell exhibitions belonging to the Bridgnorth Grammar School, and matriculated at Christ Church.

At Oxford he made the acquaintance of Thomas Gray, the poet, who was eleven years his senior. Gray had been educated at Cambridge, and had returned five years previously from his tour of Europe in company with Horace Walpole. It was during Thomas Percy's

first year at Oxford that Gray published his 'Ode on Eton College' that has since been presented to every Etonian on taking leave of his Alma Mater. In Gray Thomas Percy found a kindred spirit, and with all the enthusiasm of youth began a short memoir of his friend, which, alas! came to an early and abrupt conclusion after the manner of our childish diaries, which rarely survived the first few weeks of the opening year. Percy prefaces his 'Short Minutes of my Conversation with Mr. Gray, the Poet,' with the statement that, though dated at the time, they were not written till a month after, when it was possible for some small particulars to have escaped his memory, and some trifling mistakes to have occurred to him. He who would play Boswell must not procrastinate.

'Mr. Gray was educated at Peter House. In the great fire in Cornhill he had a parcel of houses burnt down, in which his fortune then chiefly consisted, which reduced him to some straits and made a great impression on his spirits. He retired for some time to private lodgings in the country and indulged in melancholy, under the influence of which he wrote his "Elegy on the Country Churchyard." Upon his return to College he brought back with him such a dread of fire that he never slept without a ladder of ropes near him. Some young rakish Fellow-Commoners one night in a frolick raised . . .' Here ends this brief biography, and unfortunately the friendship that started with so much enthusiasm was broken off in like manner. In 1767 Percy wrote to a friend asking him to procure from Mr. Gray some anecdotes about Jane Shore, and added 'I must beg you not to mention my name; I do not choose to apply to him for any favour of any kind.' Though Percy was quick-tempered and ready to take

offence, it must be remembered that Gray's friendship with Horace Walpole also closed abruptly.

Percy, however, preserved the following note, written by the poet in the early days of their acquaintance:

'Mr. Gray presents his compliments to Mr. Piercy. He sent the book this morning to Mr. Blakeway's Chambers, where he imagined Mr. Piercy to be.

'The Messenger is a little in liquor, therefore have a care of sending him to fetch it.'

He also kept a list of old English books, of which Gray was anxious 'to get a sight for a few days.'

Thomas Percy was possessed of a secret treasure that stimulated his interest in such books; he tells us that it was 'in his early youth' that he discovered a manuscript that proved to be the foundation of his great work, the 'Reliques,' which made an epoch in the history of English literature. Though we do not know the exact date, it was evidently before his college days that he found the 'scrubby, shabby paper book lying dirty on the floor under a bureau in the parlour of Humphrey Pitt, of Shifnal in Shropshire.' If any circumstance that decides a man's life-work can be accounted an accident, we should say that he chanced to enter the room when the manuscript was being used by the maids to light the fire. The volume had already lost some of its first and last pages, and even its rescuer, who had not as yet become an antiquary, admits that he only learnt by degrees to reverence it. In later life he pleaded his youth as an excuse for the scribble which he made on its margin, and confesses that in one or two instances he took out leaves to save the trouble of transcribing. He was afterwards more careful of the book that was destined to make his name revered as

the 'Father of poetical taste' and was also to prove the object of unsatisfied curiosity and endless controversy among succeeding generations of antiquaries and men of letters.

To become a 'Clerk in Holy Orders' was at that time the natural course for youths with literary tastes to pursue, and shortly after taking his M.A. degree Thomas Percy was ordained, and was presented by his college to the country living of Easton Maudit, in the county of Northampton. He was instituted on November 27, 1753, though he did not become resident in his parish until three years later, when he was presented to the additional living of Wilby. This extension of his sphere of usefulness made an occasional residence among his parishioners desirable during the twenty-nine years that he held the two benefices. But, as will be seen, his work in the Midlands was varied by long periods of residence at Alnwick and Syon, Northumberland House and the Deanery at Carlisle, not to mention his constant presence in the literary world in London.

CHAPTER II

1753–1758

Easton Maudit is a picturesque little village with a few scattered farmhouses and cottages. Its fine church possesses one of those beautiful and graceful spires for which this county of 'Spires and Squires' is famous, and those who have travelled between Peterborough and Northampton will remember the succession of hills rising from a flat country, each crowned by its church, around which cluster the village and the seat of the Squire.

From the quiet churchyard of Easton Maudit might be seen Castle Ashby, belonging to the Earl of Northampton, and adjoining the north side of the churchyard stood the old Hall, where dwelt the Earl of Sussex, who ever proved himself a kind friend to Thomas Percy. At his death in 1799 the title became extinct, and the elopement of his daughter and heiress, Lady Barbara Yelverton, from an inn at Barnet to Gretna Green, with Colonel Gould, caused family dissensions that resulted in the sale of all his possessions.

The vicarage of Easton Maudit was 'a neat cottage of stone, with window sashes throughout the house,' a luxury with which the true Queen Anne houses were furnished, though late Victorian imitations have reverted to the clumsy method of earlier days by opening their windows outwards. The cottage, which was thatched, commanded no prospect, but 'was perfectly

snug and pastoral,' and contained 'two comfortable parlours of pleasant dimensions, neatly wainscoted, and also two very good bed-chambers.'

The garden was sheltered on every side, except the south, by Lord Sussex's 'stately groves,' and was bounded by a meadow through which ran a smooth and limpid stream, whose banks Percy planted with wild flowers. Immediately adjacent were a kitchen garden, brew-house, and all other things convenient. Hard by a good turnpike road put this 'compact little retirement' in regular communication with London three times a week, and the journey of sixty miles could be performed with ease in one day. Notwithstanding these attractions Thomas Percy did not take up his residence at Easton Maudit till 1756, when Lord Sussex added the adjoining parish, on the condition that he should occasionally go down and take care of his churches.

Shortly after Percy had taken possession of his second living he wrote from Lord Sussex's house in Pall Mall to his cousin, William Cleveland, to congratulate him on his own entrance into Priest's orders, and added:

'I sincerely wish you all imaginable success in your pursuits, and hope to see you happily settled, preferr'd and married. For my part I am a sincere admirer of the ladies and endeavour to be upon very good terms with all the lovely and amiable part of them; but for an attachment for life to any one of them I cannot say I am very eager about it. Seated as I am in a rural retreat for life, I have the happiness to be upon a very friendly footing with several very good girls; but perhaps the peculiar chosen female that is to take me captive for life has not yet fallen in my way.

The life I lead is suited to my taste. My time is divided between books and pleasure. I enjoy much of the company of the fair sex, without being pestered with too much care. I am near enough to London, yet do not feel the inconvenience of its neighbourhood. When I am in a studious fit, I bury myself in books; when in a gay mood I gallant it among the ladies, whose friendship and confidence I enjoy without being too closely nailed down to them. This week Easton Maudit wears a smiling aspect. My lord and some agreeable young people of distinction are down here; they do me the honour to confine me altogether to their company, so that it is but seldom I can steal an hour to converse with an absent friend. I am to taste some of the sweets which a bachelor's life affords beyond that of a married man. This evening there is to be a grand ball and assembly at Newport Pagnel, where all the nobility and gentry of the neighbourhood will be; and I am already engaged to dance with a new-married lady of some distinction. Perhaps it would have been more eligible to have fixed upon a partner somewhat less engaged; but as I have seen very few of the females of this neighbourhood, I have purposely kept myself free to choose another time when I have taken a more general survey. I am given to expect a fine collection of belles this evening, and how my heart will escape among them, heaven knows.'

. . . . . .

So far Thomas Percy has acknowledged himself to be one whose sole object was to get what he could out of life, without a thought of what he could contribute. Totally absorbed in the enjoyment of his books, and of his leisure, his fine company, and schemes for self-advancement, indulging in dreams of 'a kind of millen-

nium,' only tempered by selfish fears of a state from which death alone could give deliverance, he suddenly experienced in 1756 one of those awakening blows that occasionally strike us with the force of a sledge-hammer, but more often aim quietly at the exact point where they may hit the hardest, with a stroke that would be scarcely perceptible to any but ourselves. The first rude shock that brought Thomas Percy face to face with the realities of life and death was the loss of his younger brother, the only one that had given him no pain but that of losing him, while the elder one survived to be a constant source of anxiety and embarrassment.

He thus described the event:

'Finding that I had a younger brother unprovided for, my lord [Sussex] offered to obtain a commission for him, and took upon himself to form him up for the station. Poor Arthur was at worst no bad figure, and it is inconceivable what an addition his regimentals made to him. We spared no expense, but amidst the unexpected splendour to which he was so suddenly raised (for my lord took him to walk with him every day in the Park) he still preserved that unaffected simplicity of manner which was neither assuming or conceited.

'Thus elated and overjoy'd, judge of the bitterness of our woe to be informed by strangers that a few days after his arrival at Portsmouth he was seized with a malignant fever which carried him off.

'You will excuse the interrupting blots in the above afflicting narrative: to have written with neatness would have argued a criminal unconcern. I suppose you could find in the Registers no accounts of our family farther back than those you have transcribed, or you would have inserted them.'

Though a neat handwriting under the influence of strong emotion might appear heartless, Thomas Percy preserved, even under the most afflicting circumstances, his never-failing love of endless genealogies, and was ready to exclaim, as the progenitor of an ancient French family is said to have done during the Deluge, *Surtout sauvez les papiers.*

The following year, at the age of thirty, Percy experienced the first symptoms of that affection of his eyes, which to a man of his literary tastes was perhaps the particular thorn in the flesh most to be dreaded; it darkened his old age with gradual, and in the end total, blindness.

Of the progress of his matrimonial projects Percy wrote:

'Though a headlong precipitancy can never be more fatal than in a state from whence there is no deliverance but by death, yet if I met with a lass, able to soften the bitter cares of life, with a mind to delight in the conversation of a book-worm, with sufficient knowledge of the world to do the honours of my table with dignity and ease, accompanied with graces of person to secure my heart from disgust, and a fortune that will prevent future distress, then will I sing in the words of Hammond:

> What joy to wind along the cool Retreat,
> To stop and gaze on Delia as I go!
> To mingle sweet discourse with kisses sweet
> And teach my lovely scholar all I know.

'In the meantime, until this kind of millennium commences, I contrive to while away the loitering hours, and for a *bachelor forlorn* live pleasantly enough. My income enables me to keep a tolerable good house, and a little boy in a livery: it affords me money to buy

books with, and to enjoy now and then an elegant party of pleasure.

'Last week I mow'd my little Vicarage Close, and some ladies were so good as to come and help me make hay. When tired with the heat and toil of the day, upon a soft and fragrant hay-cock, with the canopy of a spreading ash, we sat down to drink tea, and spent the afternoon in the most lively and chatty manner. You will conclude without further information that they were very pretty.'

During the hunting season Percy remained in close attendance upon Lord Sussex at Easton Maudit, but with the return of spring his fancy seems once more to have 'lightly turned to thoughts of love.' He wrote the following verses on leaving Worcester one very tempestuous night in March 1758:

Deep howls the North with chilling blast,
Fast falls the snow and rain;
Down rush the floods with headlong haste,
And deluge all the plain.

Yet all in vain the tempest roars,
And whirls the drifted snow;
In vain the torrents scorn the shores,
To A * * * I must go.

Love bids achieve the hardy deed,
And act each noble part;
He wings the feet with eagle speed,
And lends the lion heart.

The cheerful blaze, the social hour,
The Friend, all plead in vain;
Love calls: I brave each adverse power
Of peril and of pain.

'And so, my friend, I find you have got it,' wrote Dr. Grainger,[1] to whom Percy had sent this poem. 'It

[1] James Grainger, poet and physician, was born at Dunse in Berwickshire in 1723. He was assisted by Percy in his *Elegies of*

is the heart that makes us eloquent. None of your social turn would desert your friend, and brave the elements, without some very valuable consideration in view, and what that consideration should be, I who have read "Tibullus" can be at no loss to guess.'

The learned compilers[1] of the short biographical preface in a modern edition of Percy's 'Reliques,' to which I am indebted for much information, assert that this poem was written by Bishop Percy to his wife in 1788, nearly thirty years after their marriage, and note the unusual permanency of his attachment. Though to few men is given the power of expressing their feelings in verse, let us rather hope and believe that such instances of unchanging devotion are not only possible but frequent, for only if we lose our ideals do we indeed become old in this world, and totally unfitted for the next. Truth, however, compels us to admit that in this case Percy not only sent copies of the poem to two of his friends in 1758, but it also appeared in the 'Grand Magazine' in the same year, with the simple precaution of changing the A, denoting Anne Gooderiche, 'the Nancy of his Muse,' to the safer appellation of Delia.

Tibullus, published in 1759. This work involved him in a paper war with Smollett. He afterwards went to the West Indies, where he wrote a poem called 'The Sugar Cane.' He died in 1767.

[1] Mr. Hales and Dr. Furnivall.

CHAPTER III

1758–1764

It was to Anne Gooderiche that Thomas Percy addressed his famous poem,

O Nancy, wilt thou go with me?

which has become one of the most popular ballads in the English tongue. Even Scotland, who, as one of her own poets reminds us, 'in right of her ballads alone, as represented in the Border Minstrelsy of Sir Walter Scott, ranks among the most poetic nations of the world,' looked with envious eye on Percy's poem and tried to annex it. It was printed

Oh! Nannie, will ye gang wi' me?

in Johnson's 'Musical Magazine' and sung at Vauxhall in 1773. Robert Burns declared that, had he been acquainted with the editor, he would have prevented 'such an impudent absurdity'; he adds, 'It is too barefaced to take Dr. Percy's charming song, and by means of transposing a few English words into Scots, to offer to pass it for a Scots song.'

It was about this time that Thomas Percy's vague dreams began to assume a more definite shape, and after he had taken a leisurely survey of all the 'belles' that Northamptonshire could produce, as well as of all the fine ladies to be met with in the 'bluestocking

salons' of the capital, they slowly began to resolve themselves into the solitary image of Anne Goodericlie. It would be rash to assert positively that any man has married his first love, even when he honestly believes it himself, but in any case it was his future wife that Percy immortalised in his first and best known ballad, unlike Sir Walter Scott who clothed Margaret of Branksome and Matilda in the form of an early love, in whom, as Lockhart tells us, 'the dreams of his youthful fancy found expansion for their strength, spirit, tenderness, and beauty.'

It may have been only to the eye of the poet that 'Nancy' appeared as 'fairest of the fair,' and her charms possibly had no more material existence than the 'stuff that dreams are made of.' The world saw her merely as 'a good creature,' and Fanny Burney considered her very uncultivated and ordinary, both in manners and conversation. But the evidence of her detractors need not be considered; for, after all, only those who can boast of the distinction of having realised a poet's dream for a period of nearly half a century are qualified to throw a stone at Mrs. Percy.

Optimists declare that the generality of mankind are so anxious not to disappoint any high ideal that has been formed of them, that it is only necessary to prepare a pedestal, by assuring them that they possess all the virtues, and they will by some means or other contrive to clamber up on to it, and will stand as long as faith has power to hold them there. Percy took the precaution, in his ballad, of laying down the exact qualifications necessary for the realisation of his dreams, not omitting the closing scene of his life. Mrs. Percy fulfilled all the conditions, and only failed him in the last, as her husband survived her for five years.

O Nancy, wilt thou go with me,
Nor sigh to leave the flaunting town?
Can silent glens have charms for thee,
The lowly cot and russet gown?
No longer dressed in silken sheen,
No longer decked with jewels rare;
Say, canst thou quit each courtly scene,
Where thou wert fairest of the fair?

O Nancy, when thou'rt far away,
Wilt thou not cast a wish behind?
Say, canst thou face the parching ray,
Nor shrink before the wintry wind?
Oh, can that soft and gentle mien
Extremes of hardship learn to bear,
Nor, sad, regret each courtly scene,
Where thou wert fairest of the fair?

O Nancy, canst thou love so true,
Through perils keen with me to go?
Or, when thy swain mishap shall rue,
To share with him the pang of woe?
Say, should disease or pain befall,
Wilt thou assume the nurse's care,
Nor, wistful, those gay scenes recall,
Where thou wert fairest of the fair?

And when at last thy love shall die,
Wilt thou receive his parting breath?
Wilt thou repress each struggling sigh,
And cheer with smiles the bed of death?
And wilt thou o'er his breathless clay
Strew flowers, and drop the tender tear?
Nor, then, regret those scenes so gay,
Where thou wert fairest of the fair?

Percy had no sooner become engaged to one who was 'in every way agreeable to him,' than his satisfaction was checked by the lady of his choice being attacked with small-pox, a complaint that placed 'the brilliancy of her charms' in jeopardy. On her recovery Dr. Grainger, who had prescribed to minimise the

ravages of this distressing illness, urged Percy not to delay his marriage, 'for so transitory,' he wrote, 'are the best things of this world, that in prudence we ought to leave nothing till to-morrow.' Being himself, he declared, no very violent friend to matrimony, nor indeed likely to take anyone for better or worse, it was only his conviction that Percy's union would be attended with every happiness of which the married state is capable, that made him write, 'You have already got over your scruple of being wedded, why then procrastinate?'

On April 24, 1759, Thomas Percy married Anne, daughter of Barton Goodericlie, of Desborough, near Rothwell, in the county of Northampton. She was fortunately possessed of great gentleness and tact, and was able to supply just what her husband lacked – in fact, he might have anticipated the words of Victor Hugo in saying:

Dieu qui par toi m'a complété.

For Thomas Percy, it must be admitted, though a most pleasing companion and steady friend, possessed a violent temper that could not always be controlled, and Dr. Johnson, with whom he had many a stormy altercation, declared that Mrs. Percy had more sense than her husband.

Sir George Douglas has pronounced that the leading characteristics that should be kept in view in dealing with the life of Thomas Percy are his power of achieving two well-nigh impossible feats, that of idealising his own wife and of bullying Dr. Johnson.

The liberality and good taste of Percy had contributed a great deal to the comforts to be found in the little vicarage at Easton Maudit; but like his successor,

he probably begged his future wife not to 'raise her ideas of it too high, for no place will bear that,' adding in brackets '[No gilt paper at Easton Maudit].' By his poem he suggests that she had sacrificed many of the superfluities of life for his sake. How much of this may be ascribed to poetic licence it is impossible to say, but before the honeymoon was over she had an opportunity of showing the metal she was made of. A writer of those days assures us that no two people can love each other entirely until they have shared some common trial. Like a sensible woman, Mrs. Percy probably felt reassured when the inevitable 'but' presented itself in a visible form amid surroundings that would otherwise have been too good for this imperfect world. It came through the misfortunes or misdoings of a fellow-creature, a form of trial that requires far more patience than any sent direct from God.

As Percy's pen was now worn down with bakers' and butchers' bills, he was reduced to begging for the four stock sermons that he shared with his cousin; but to Mrs. Percy's credit be it remembered that every one of his great literary works was produced after his marriage.

He wrote to William Cleveland from Easton Maudit on June 4, 1759:

'Death and marriage are two acts of indemnity that quit all scores; I hope, therefore, you will pardon my long silence in consideration of my being a married man and under the protection of a wife. It is about a month since I was happily united to a young lady in this neighbourhood, whose fortune will be £2000, the greatest part of which I have received down. As the honeymoon is scarcely expired, you will not depend much on my present opinion, but you will conclude my bride is possessed of great goodness, when I inform

MRS. PERCY HOLDING THE MS. OF HER HUSBAND'S FAMOUS POEM
'OH! NANCY, WILT THOU GO WITH ME?'

you of her behaviour on an occasion, which is a great check to my happiness.

'My brother is involved in some difficulties, and my amiable wife, far from upbraiding me with bringing her into so unfortunate a connexion, not only used every art to console me, but took upon herself the kind office of comforting my Father by a series of letters in which she displayed a temper of the most angelic kind.

. . . . . .

'I should be glad if you could spare the four sermons I left with you, as they will soon come in turn to be used. You may send them enclosed in pacquets, each not exceeding 2 ounzes, inclosed for Lord Sussex. Please to let an interval of a week obtain between each pacquet to prevent speculation.'

On October 20, 1759, he added:

'Nothing I find can spoil correspondence like Matrimony. My desire of scribbling is a good deal abated. My pen is no longer employed as heretofore. Instead of sonnets to Amaryllis it is now so worn to the stump with domestic memorandum that I question if it could fabricate a rebus or an acrostic. I know not how it is, but the Muses themselves are seldom found to continue long under the same roof with a wife. The irregular conduct of those damsels and the bad company they commonly keep renders them unfit guests for a sober settled family, and like other old maids they cannot bear the squalling of brats and the rocking of cradles or any approaches to a state of this kind. . . . I do not know that I have ever, like Parson Abraham Adams, lamented that my wife does not understand Greek; but I fancy she has reason to regret that I am not a better judge of the little domestic female excellencies, in which I believe she appears to advantage.

However, I am endeavouring to extend my sphere of knowledge and can already understand almost all the terms of art employed about the making of a pudding or a cheese-cake. . . . No married man ever writes a letter over twice, so excuse these interlineations.'

At Easton Maudit six children were born to Thomas and Anne Percy. Three daughters died in infancy, and were buried there ; the only son, Henry, died of consumption just as he was approaching manhood, and two daughters survived, Barbara, who married Samuel Isted of Ecton, Northampton, and Elizabeth, wife of the Honourable and Reverend Pierce Meade.

Thomas Percy's first literary work was published in 1761. It was a translation from a Portuguese MS. of a Chinese novel, 'Hau Kiou Choaun,' containing in four volumes a Chinese play, proverbs, and poetry. The actual translation from the Chinese was executed by Mr. Wilkinson, and Percy merely translated the translator into good English. In 1758 Horace Walpole had made some noise by a smart political squib, which had taken him half an hour to write, entitled 'The Letters of Xo Ho, a Chinese Philosopher at London, to his friend Lien Chi at Pekin,' which ran through five editions. It was said that Goldsmith, encouraged by the interest that the Chinese novel of his 'dignified acquaintance, Mr. Percy,' had awakened in the affairs of China and the Far East, began a series of Chinese letters in the 'Ledger' that were subsequently republished as 'The Citizen of the World, or Letters from a Chinese Philosopher in London to his Friend in the East.' But, as at the close of 1760 ninety-eight of these letters had been published, it seems more probable that the idea was suggested to him by reading

the work of his friend, Thomas Percy, while it was still in manuscript. 'Hau Kiou Choaun' was dedicated to the Countess of Sussex.

In 1762 Percy published 'Miscellaneous Pieces relating to the Chinese,' and dedicated it to my Lord Sussex's grandmother, Barbara Viscountess Longueville, after whom he also named his daughter, who subsequently became Mrs. Isted.

The early years of Thomas Percy's married life were fully occupied with literary work, for he had at the same time undertaken to edit the works of the Duke of Buckingham, and in 1763 he commenced a new edition of Surrey's poems, with some account of the early use of blank verse in English. These two works were printed but never published; Nichols had rescued them from the fire that destroyed Tonson's warehouse; but in 1788, finding they took up a great deal of room in his premises, he wrote to Percy, who had then become Bishop of Dromore, begging leave to turn them at once into waste paper if there was no prospect of their being ultimately published. Percy requested him patiently to shelter his quires in a corner of his warehouse until he could return from his Irish diocese to complete them. Sheets of Surrey's and Buckingham's poems were submitted for Horace Walpole's approval in 1792, twenty-five years after they were printed. But, by that time, Percy found his fondness for these pursuits declining, and put them into the hands of his nephew and namesake, Thomas Percy, on whom he had fixed his hopes, as a literary successor, after the death of his own son. But here again he was disappointed, for the year 1808 saw not only the death of his nephew but the destruction of the whole stock of this ill-fated work by a fire that

took place in Red Lion Passage. Only a few copies that had been privately circulated escaped.

In 1763 Thomas Percy published anonymously 'Five Pieces of Runic Poetry from the Islandic Language.' This attempt was owing to the success of the Erse fragments, the first Ossianic publication of James Macpherson, which Shenstone pronounced to be Scotch snuff of better quality than any he had before tasted.

We hear little of Percy's parish work, but he assured Dr. Johnson that it might be discerned whether or no there was a resident clergyman in any parish by the civil or savage manners of the people. A very savage parish—which may possibly have been his own—had, he declared, been civilised by a decayed gentlewoman who came among the people as teacher in a petty school. In another case a clergyman found that his exhortations to attend the Holy Communion were met by an old woman with the objection that she was no scholar, so he employed a parishioner a little wiser than the rest to talk to the people in a language on a level with their minds.

In the summer of 1764 Dr. Johnson paid a long-promised visit to Easton Maudit, which he described as a dull parsonage in a dull country; and it was probably during this visit that he wrote, in conjunction with Percy, a review of Grainger's 'Sugar Cane,' which appeared in the 'London Chronicle' the same year. Dr. Johnson stayed for some months, and tradition says that he and Percy spent many an hour pacing up and down the little terrace that has since been known as Dr. Johnson's Walk, discussing the publication of the 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' on which collection Percy had long been engaged. He had

both shown and lent the precious folio manuscript to his friend.

During this visit Dr. Johnson was not only attended by his faithful negro servant, Francis Barber, but he was also so desirous of procuring amusement for his blind old pensioner, Mrs. Williams, that he incommoded the Percys, as he did many of his other friends, by carrying her with him to their house. In consequence of her blindness her manner of eating was said 'to offend the delicacy of persons of nice sensations.'

It had been represented to Mrs. Percy that she would find Dr. Johnson a most formidable guest, but during the months he spent at Easton Maudit he seemed perfectly quiet and contented. Through life he was immoderately fond of reading romances of chivalry, and to these extravagant fictions he attributed that unsettled turn of mind which prevented his ever fixing on any profession. During this visit he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance 'Felixmarte of Hircania' in folio, which he read quite through. One morning after breakfast his host announced that he had arranged some books for his perusal, but Dr. Johnson, who had very clearly defined notions of good breeding, though his violent temper often prevented his carrying them into practice, courteously replied 'No, sir, I shall first attend upon Mrs. Percy to feed the ducks.'

He had little taste for country life, and speaking of a clerical friend he said 'This man fills up the duties of his life well. I approve of him, but could not imitate him. I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who *makes* it an easy life. A conscientious clergyman is the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather

have a Chancery suit on my hands than the cure of souls.'

Dr. Johnson was very fond of children, and one day he took Percy's little daughter upon his knee and asked her what she thought of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The child answered that she had not read it. 'No?' replied the Doctor, 'then I would not give one farthing for you,' and he set her down, and took no more notice of her. As she could have been little over four years old at this period, her ignorance of that great work appears excusable; but Johnson always held that children's books should deal with the adventures, real or imaginary, of their elders; babies, he maintained, do not want to read about other babies.

His great mind, no doubt, marvelled at the restricted outlook of the local magnates. Lesser folk than Dr. Johnson sometimes hear with an inward smile those who chance to have attained to a slightly more conspicuous position than that for which their education has fitted them, complain of their inability to remember their neighbours' faces. Apart from the fact that to an intelligent observer of the human race, the less cultivated portion of it possesses the most marked characteristics, such people admit that they have not even had the perception to make good the defects of their early training. In the education of royal infants, this matter has been so insisted on, that at length it has become an hereditary instinct. To a lady who exonerated herself from her social duties to her neighbours by saying that she would visit them if it would do them any good, Dr. Johnson promptly replied 'What good, madam, do you expect to have it in your power to do them? It is by showing them respect; *that* is doing them good.'

When Dr. Johnson left Easton Maudit he gave his inkhorn to his host as a memento of his visit: it is now in the possession of Thomas Percy's great-grand-daughter.

Here ends the record of the early married life of Anne Percy, which was a period of considerable literary activity for her husband, and preceded the publication of his greatest work. It might be said of her, as was said of the wife of the elder Pitt, that 'proud of him in the world, she was submissive to him at home.' A portrait of Mrs. Percy holding in her hand a scroll inscribed 'Oh Nancy' hung for many years at Ecton, the home of her son-in-law, Mr. Isted; but after the place passed through the female line to the family of its present owner, Major-General Sotheby, this portrait was given to her descendant, Miss Constance Meade.

CHAPTER IV

1765

When Thomas Percy was thirty-six years of age, he published the first edition of his 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' and this work has made his name revered by all who have 'the curiosity and sense to listen to the rude songs of their ancestors,' and desire to catch something of 'their energetic simplicity.' The year 1765, in which the 'Reliques' appeared, was consequently a memorable one in the history of literature, and in the annals of black-letter learning. Percy was the first to direct attention to the antiquities of the grand Scandinavian North, whence he traced the origin of the old metrical romances. His views on the subject are not altogether confirmed by the greatest living authorities on the ancient ballads. Sir George Douglas tells us 'that very little is known certainly as to the origin of the popular poetry which was orally transmitted through succeeding generations, and that the opinions expressed by Percy are at best only ingenious theories, though doubtless as plausible as any other.' Mr. Henry Wheatley, in his edition of the 'Reliques' published in 1876, gives Percy's essays exactly as he left them, though in his preface he declares them to be 'out of date' in the light of recent discoveries. But in this record of his life and works his theories must, of course, be adopted. According to Percy, the earliest folk-lore descended direct from the

Gothic bards, or Scalds, who were employed by their rulers to transmit history by oral tradition. When the art of writing made this method of instruction unnecessary the Scalds began to embroider truth, for the entertainment of their more cultivated hearers, with stories of dragons, goblins, spells and enchantments, that made their histories appear like romances, although founded on fact. This art they imported from the north of Asia, whence they had migrated under Odin. Percy maintained that the idea of chivalry also sprang from the North, and was of Gothic origin; the quest for adventure, respect for women, and challenge to single combat, were, he declared, entirely opposed to the customs of the Greek, Roman, or Mahometan nations. The feudal ages had developed, and the enthusiasm of the Crusaders had perfected, a spirit that had long existed among the Scandinavian nations. Percy vigorously opposed the opinion of some learned men, that the spirit of chivalry and romance was caught by the Spaniards from the Arabians and Moors, and transmitted by them to Britain, France, Italy, Germany and the North. In the earliest Spanish romance, 'Amadis de Gaul,' the scene is laid in Gaul and Britain. In 800, Regner, King of Denmark, was able to record in his own verses his valiant achievement in slaying the dragon that held captive the beautiful daughter of a Swedish Prince, whom he subsequently married.

Following up this line of research Percy published five years later, in 1770, a translation of Mallet's 'Northern Antiquities' 'together with a translation of the Edda, and other pieces from the ancient Islandic tongue, taken from the introduction to L'Histoire de Dannemarc and Goranson's Latin Version of the Edda.' He was thus the first to make known in this

country the interest of the old Norse life with its wonderful mythology of the Eddas, and to stimulate the study of northern literature. In his preface he clearly marked the difference between the Celtic and Teutonic races, whose identity Cluverius, as well as Keysler and Pelloutier, had previously maintained, and vigorously refuted the theory that the ancient Gauls and Germans, the Britons and Saxons, had a common origin.

Thomas Percy held that when the Normans, or Northmen, from Norway and Denmark, overran France under Rollo, at the end of the ninth century, they brought with them their poetic art, which was then at its highest perfection. The Scalds who accompanied Rollo substituted the heroes of Christendom for their own Pagan ancestors, and embellished their songs with the fables of their own country. At the battle of Hastings, Taillefer, minstrel to the Conqueror, roused the invading army by singing the 'Song of Roland,' and then led them to victory and himself fell foremost in the fight.

Thus Percy traced the descent of the French romances of chivalry from the Northern Sagas, or histories, in which the older records are written in verse. In earlier times, when the Danes and Angles peopled Northumbria, which included all the country between the Humber and the Forth, the Danish and Icelandic Scalds imported their art to that district, whence almost every English bard of eminence afterwards came. From these minstrels the Northumbrian people acquired a habit of singing in parts that prevailed down to the reign of Henry II. Even the children from their cradles would hum together, one murmuring the bass and the other warbling the treble.

The old written Northumbrian poetry, though it has been handed down to us in a southern dialect, had its source in that country adjoining either side of the Tweed, that Thomas Percy declared was the true home of the ballad, and to this day remains the 'Land of Song.'

There is a seriousness and earnestness in the writings of the Northumbrian poets which is also shown by their descendants in the Border ballads. Sir George Douglas, in his Introduction to the 'Scottish Fairy and Folk Tales,' and in his 'History of the Border Counties,' tells us that the 'gloom which tinged the superstitions and beliefs of the Scottish peasantry' and produced the poetry, which by its pathos 'beyond all hope of rivalry has shown to the fullest the sharp sense of life and death and the cruelty of eternal separation,' is to be attributed to the 'old Border life, so rife with tragedy.' Like all the best and greatest things in this world, it was the outcome of suffering, without which nothing can be made perfect. No doubt the heroic poems and legends in which their Northumbrian forefathers delighted, that bore so strong a resemblance to those of Denmark, owed their 'gloom and sombre genius' as well as their strength and beauty 'to the hostility of Nature in a barren soil and stormy climate in which man fights for life against impossible odds.'

The poetic and intellectual superiority that the Border country has maintained from the earliest times has never been disputed. Consequently Dr. Johnson's combative spirit was stimulated by the mere mention of a Scotsman, while his less militant followers have declared that England really extends to the Forth, and that it is owing to a mere historical and geographical error that the old Northumbrian boundary and that of the Roman Empire have not been followed.

The art of poetry gradually spread to the South, and the minstrels occupied, according to Percy, an important position among the Anglo-Saxon laity, though before the Conquest, he declared, they were not much favoured by the monks. The French ecclesiastics, however, with whom their Anglo-Saxon brethren were in close correspondence on literary matters, loved minstrelsy to such a degree that the Emperor Charlemagne found it necessary to forbid minstrels to enter a monastery. In Wales, Cornwall and Cumberland, minstrelsy was idolised, and though of pagan origin it was never opposed to Christianity. A host of Irish saints, coming from that island that claims to be the land of minstrelsy, inspired their Saxon proselytes with a love of the art. Maldulph, an Irish poet, the preceptor of St. Aldhelm, established a school at Ingelborn, to which he gave the name of Mandulphsburgh or Malmesbury.

An ignorance of poetry and music marked an ignoble education. To prove the humble origin of the poet Cædmon,[1] King Alfred declared that among his early associates there was but a single harp. That monarch, who ruled the kingdom of Wessex, was, as we all know, both a poet and a musician. The Anglo-Saxon minstrels were a distinct and highly respected race who sang their own poems, accompanying themselves on the harp with music of their own composition. They lived by their art, and looked for no future fame. They imparted such pleasure that the word 'glee' still expresses the mirth and jollity of simple minds, though the lugubrious countenances and doleful dirges of modern glee singers appear to contradict the assertion.

[1] A monk of Whitby, to whom Milton is believed to be indebted for some of his ideas in *Paradise Lost*.

The minstrels also occupied an important position after the Conquest. Richard I. practised the art, and wrote a ballad during his confinement in Germany, imploring two of his bards, Pensavin and Chail, to use their talents in his cause. The place of his captivity was at last discovered by his minstrel Blondel singing near his window the first half of another ballad that he and the King had composed together, which his master answered by continuing the song.

During a crusade in the Holy Land in 1271, the life of Edward I. was saved from the hand of an assassin by his minstrel. Henry V. took fifteen of his minstrels with him to France in 1415, paying them large sums of money and clothing them sumptuously. On his return, when he made his triumphant entry into London, after the battle of Agincourt, he restrained them from celebrating his glorious victory in song, because 'he would wholly have the praise and thanks given to God.'

In those days much was required of kings and princes. Unless they made their mark in history by exceptional villainy, they were expected to be men of parts, equally ready with pen and sword. While King Henry was giving and receiving more 'blowes and stripes' than he cared to acknowledge, his prisoner Charles, Duke of Orleans, passed his hours of captivity in writing English poems in the place of French sonnets. Unfortunately the invention of gunpowder and the development of the destructive art of literary criticism have made it no longer desirable for royal personages to take a prominent position in the field of battle or in that of literature.

In Scotland the minstrels were so highly esteemed in the Middle Ages that in 1474, during the reign of James III., the Scottish Parliament enacted a sumptuary

law forbidding any man to wear silken doublets, gowns or cloaks, except knights, minstrels, heralds and gentlemen, who had £100 a year in land. Yet so uncertain is public opinion, that one hundred years later, when the art of minstrelsy began to decline, another law was passed against 'sic as make themselves fules and are bards.'

The genuine minstrel occupied a recognised position in the employment of the King and of his nobles, and wore the badge of his employer. He treasured his ballads for his own use, and objected to their being written down, whereas the mere ballad singer's object was to sell his broad-sheets. The minstrel received a groat, which, until the Elizabethan age, was worth one shilling, for each fit or division of his song. After the Restoration, which Parker's ballad,

The King shall enjoy his own again,

had done so much to promote, the value of the groat fell to fourpence, and that small coin is still known as fiddler's money. It was probably in allusion to the entertainment afforded by humbler artists that Samuel Pepys writes of 'penny merriments.'

In an article on 'Border Ballads' in the 'Edinburgh Review' for October 1906, from which, in this chapter, many quotations are taken, Sir George Douglas tells us that 'the result of recent historic investigation has raised the credit of the ballads as historical evidence. Though the balladist might err in details, such as names or dates, he could be depended upon for rendering the spirit of the scene, and might be trusted not to manufacture history.' He had little temptation to do so, for he saw his romances enacted daily before his eyes. Most of the heroic ballads were inspired

by some stirring event, and the bard sang as he was moved, often adding extempore stanzas for the occasion, which accounts for the great variety of the versions. Burns, we are told, 'had this in common with the ballad-makers—that he owed a maximum to nature and a minimum to art.' When requested to recite by a host who had previously relegated the poet to the society of the servants' hall, the genius of Burns flashed forth at the expense of

> Yon birkie ca'd a lord
> Wha struts and stares . . . .

and on the spur of the moment he entertained the guests with his celebrated poem

> A man's a man for a' that.

In the old ballads all the human emotions of love, pity, fear and hate went straight from the hearts of the unlettered men who made them to the hearts of the equally ignorant folk who listened to them, with that living power of simplicity and truth without which the most cultivated audience will remain unmoved, however much its interest may be awakened. The graphic force of these spirited and straightforward verses, full of incident and action, possesses an unconscious simplicity and undoubting faith that no artist can reproduce, for it is as hard to regain the artlessness of the ballad-singer as to recover the simplicity of childhood or restore the bloom to the peach.

For generations the ballads belonged to the people only, and had such a hold upon them that, according to Fletcher of Saltoun, 'if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws.' Even in the Elizabethan period, when this popular poetry had declined, Lord Burghley as a

statesman gauged the state of public opinion by the ballads, and ordered all broad-sheets to be brought to him as they were printed.

Though the songs of a nation are the outcome of its history, just as a man's writings are that of his mind and life, yet the voice of the people can only find utterance through the genius of its men of letters, and in the above-mentioned article on 'Border Ballads' Mr. Lang's theory of collective authorship is entirely rejected, for we are reminded by the writer that in all ages 'the creative temperament has been exceptional and the non-creative normal,' and that it must have indeed been exceptional genius that 'sprang from the midst of a life so rude and lawless as that of the dwellers in the Border country.'

We are told elsewhere by the same authority that the authors of the 'Border Ballads,' being 'spirits of gentler nature, and of sensitive, imaginative minds, were in their own day regarded as unimportant, and their names forgotten, whilst those of the fighters survived.' Yet these are the men whose works are immortal, and through whose genius the fighters live. 'For they put before us in wonderfully fresh colours the pride of life and manhood in the free existence of the forest . . . . and serve strangely to humanise that savage life for us.'

In England, at the end of the fourteenth century, 'Robin Hood' was a popular hero in the 'Vision of Piers the Ploughman,' and Shakespeare, as we know, made use of some of the ballads; but, while in the North they gained strength and spirit from being orally transmitted to succeeding generations, in the South they soon became tame and spiritless through the early printing of the English broad-sheet.

As the art of printing became generally known in England, that of minstrelsy gradually declined. Strolling singers of no recognised status brought the calling into disrepute, and the minstrels themselves ceased to sing songs of their own composition. Though Alice Boyce, a Border gipsy, sang her way to London, and had the honour of performing 'O the broom' and 'Lady Greene Sleeves' before Queen Elizabeth, genuine minstrelsy ceased to exist in England at the end of that monarch's reign.

Sir George Douglas tells us that the method by which literature preserves tradition is 'to kill it and embalm its body.' Therefore, at the moment that minstrelsy died, a particular class of collectors, like Captain Cox of the Elizabethan period, proceeded to embalm it, and never rested day or night until they could procure all the original editions of the black-letter ballads.

Sir Philip Sidney and Lord Dorset were among the early English poets who delighted in these popular tales, and Dryden sang of the glorious days when

> Thespis, the first professor of our art,
> At country wakes sung ballads from a cart;

but Addison was the first who honestly confessed his taste for this ancient poetry, and treated it as a serious subject for literary criticism. 'Your little buffoon readers,' he admits, 'will not be able to take in the beauty of it,' for only those possessed of true greatness of soul and genius can overlook the ridiculous side of it, and the despicable simplicity of the verse, and admire nature unclothed and destitute of art. 'Though the language is mean, the thoughts are natural,' and it is by that 'touch that makes the whole world kin,' it has

power to move people of every degree. Ben Jonson declared that he would rather be the author of 'Chevy Chase' than of all his works, and Sir Philip Sidney never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that 'he found not his heart moved more than with a trumpet,' yet Addison was ridiculed by the wits of his day for pointing out its beauties. They wrote a parody on his essay, pretending to show that the 'History of Tom Thumb' was imbued with the spirit of Virgil. He was thus unfortunately deterred from examining, in like manner, the 'Babes in the Wood.' But he delighted in the genius of the author, and above all in the 'little ornament of the robin red-breast,' a fiction that Horace also makes use of.

In the 'Chevy Chase,' Addison was struck by the graphic touches that convey in a few words the different manner in which the Scottish and English kings receive the news that their two great leaders are slain. On hearing of the death of Earl Douglas:

> 'O heavy news,' King James did say,
> 'Scotland may witness be,
> I have not any captain more,
> Of such account as he.'

In complete contrast we have the light-hearted and boastful manner in which the English King takes the loss of Earl Percy:

> 'Now God be with him,' said our King,
> 'Sith 'twill no better be,
> I trust I have within my realm
> Five hundred as good as he.'

Generous and full of majestic simplicity is the lament, to which Addison calls our attention, of Earl Percy over his enemy, Earl Douglas, by whose chivalry the battle has been reduced to single combat:

Then leaving life, Earl Percy took
The dead man by the hand,
And said, 'Earl Douglas, for thy life,
Would I had lost my land.

'O Christ! my very heart doth bleed
With sorrow for thy sake,
For sure a more redoubted knight
Mischance could never take.'

The taste for preserving the old ballads rapidly grew, especially in the North, which was the land of their birth. John Bell, in his little book-shop on the quay at Newcastle, preserved and printed lines 'which of yore cheered the hearts and inflamed the passions' of his fellow-townsmen. He called his children after the heroes of the 'Chevy Chase,' a custom that marked the revival of the old ballads, and has since been followed by many who thus seek to connect their names with the age of chivalry, selecting either hero, according to the side of the Tweed to which they chance to belong. Bell's collection was afterwards purchased by Sir Walter Scott.

About the time that Percy published his 'Reliques,' Horace Walpole lamented that the world had gone a long, long way beyond the possibility of writing a good song. All the words in the language had already been employed on simple images, without which no song can be good. But the miracle of a new birth is not only possible but necessary to the life of art, as it is essential to that of the individual in whom, if the spirit of faith, simplicity and truth is lost, and not by some means rekindled, the soul is dead even in this world. Molière shows us this.

When the 'Misanthrope' heard his rival recite the verses that he had addressed to the lady for whose favour they were both contending, he assured him that such artificial and half-hearted sentiments are worth nothing:

. . . ce n'est point ainsi que parle la nature
. . . . . .
Nos pères tout grossiers, l'avaient beaucoup meilleur ;
Et je prise bien moins tout ce que l'on admire,
Qu'une vieille chanson que je m'en vais vous dire.

Si le roi m'avait donné
Paris, sa grand' ville,
Et qu'il me fallut quitter
L'amour de ma mie !
Je dirais au roi Henri :
Reprenez votre Paris,
J'aime mieux ma mie ô gué !
J'aime mieux ma mie.

Voilà ce que peut dire un cœur vraiment épris.

A reaction had set in, and the world had wearied of the ponderous speech and writings of the eighteenth century, with its dull conventionality. There were, of course, literary giants in those days, but the rank and file, with their long-winded sentences and artificial sentiments, had become intolerable. Therefore the wigs of these puppets were sent flying, that human nature might once more be revealed.

Percy's maternal ancestor, John Cleveland, was a poet whom Milton's own nephew described as our 'chiefest English bard,'[1] yet he sacrificed future reputation to the false taste of the time, whereas Milton studied the simplicity of the ancients and gained immortal fame. Dr. Percy possessed a portrait of Cleveland painted by Fuller, whose picture of 'The Resurrection' at Magdalen College was celebrated by Addison. The poet is represented holding a scroll of paper, on which is inscribed the title of his favourite poem, 'The Rebel Scot.' Percy said 'his poetry had no fault except that of Cowley, excess of wit.'

[1] See *Theatrum Poetarum*, Lond., 1675.

JOHN CLEVELAND HOLDING THE MS. OF HIS FAVOURITE POEM 'THE REBEL SCOT.'

To the poet Shenstone, at whose suggestion Thomas Percy had undertaken to collect the old ballads, the time seemed to be favourable for a revival of these poems. In the works of Akenside, Gray and Mason, the public had seen all that art could do; they wanted wild, pure, original, enthusiastic genius; they seemed to cry

> Oh, rather than be slaves to these deep-learned men,
> Give us our wildness and our woods, our huts and caves again.

In the force and beauty of the ancient folk-lore, Shenstone found 'the very quintessence of poetry, a few drops of which, properly managed, are enough to give a flavour to a quart bottle.' He had himself long had the work much at heart, but he was 'infested by a kind of drowsihead and lentor,' to which he gives 'that disreputable name, Stupidity,' that unfortunately proved to be the forerunner of his last illness. Having seen the curious old folio manuscript that Percy had rescued many years previously, Shenstone advised him to undertake a work for which he considered him as well qualified as any man in England. He assured him of his willing co-operation, begging Percy to consider him as a mere music-master, whom he might employ to tune his harpsichord, or rather as one who would correct any want of simplicity, ease of style, or harmony in his writing.

But two years before the work was published, death deprived Percy of the assistance of a friend with whom he was in such close sympathy, that he was enabled to write a description of the Leasowes, Shenstone's home, which he had never seen. In imagination he could safely wander among the entangled walks and the diversified prospects of his

friend's little domain, without fear of being disillusioned by approaching them from inconvenient points of view.

Like all great works, the 'Reliques' grew gradually, and was the product of many minds. David Garrick contributed ballads from his large collection; Dr. Warton ransacked the Oxford libraries, while Percy employed six amanuenses to transcribe from Samuel Pepys' collection at Cambridge.

To Oliver Goldsmith, Percy owed more than to any other literary man of the day. His counsel was that of knowledge, for he had supported himself in early life by writing ballads which he sold for five shillings each to a small bookseller in Dublin, and had observed the popular taste by watching their reception in the streets.[1]

The ballads of the English minstrels Percy enriched by the addition of simple lays in the old Scottish dialect from the collection of Sir David Dalrymple, and Magdalene College library furnished poems by Dunbar and Maitland of Lethington. Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Wales and Ireland sent contributions, and researches were made by Dr. Grainger even in the West Indies, which, however, produced no book of knight-errantry; but he declared that he 'had travelled through Japan with Kaempfer, and had made the tour of the Chinese Wall with Athanasius Kircher, yet neither Hisson nor Pekin had yielded him half the amusement that

[1] In infancy Goldsmith delighted in the ballads of the Irish peasantry, and to the end of his life could repeat the folk-lore of his country, that he had learned from the Irish bards who stimulated the imagination of their hearers. As a child he had been taken to see Carolan, the last of these wandering story-tellers, who travelled about the country with his horse and his harp. He composed both words and music and conferred fame on his entertainers by singing their praises, and calling his songs after their names.

Arthur's Court used to do at Percy's own fireside.' Help was also received from Dr. Birch, Dr. Farmer, and two other literary friends. From the ancient manuscript that had first inspired him to attempt the revival of the old ballads, Percy only took forty-five out of the 180 pieces it contained. Those that he considered objectionable he crossed through with his own hand. Though some of the poems were written before the time of Chaucer, the collection is believed to have been made during the reign of Charles I. and to have been transcribed by Thomas Blount, who published the account of the escape of Charles II. entitled 'Boscobel, 1660.'

When Percy discovered this torn and unbound volume lying dirty on the floor under a bureau, and being used by Humphrey Pitt's maids to light the fire, he little thought that its publication was destined to open a new field of poetry, and to make an epoch in the history of English literature.

The enthusiasm revived by Percy for the old ballads quickly spread among all classes. When Sir Walter Scott, at the age of ten, made a collection of penny chap-books from the baskets of travelling pedlars, far from using them to light the fires, the servants were so charmed with them that it was with difficulty that 'he wrested them from their clutches.'

Addison recommended to his readers the custom of the Mahometans, who examine carefully every piece of writing that they find lying on the ground on the chance of its containing some portion of their Koran. Like Percy, he possessed this 'inquisitive temper' and could not forbear looking into every printed paper that chanced to come in his way; he had more than once lighted his pipe with the writings of a prelate, and had

met with such an excellent page of good old Richard Baxter's 'Saint's Rest' under 'a Christmas pye' that he bought the whole book. From a paper kite he had received great improvement, and on the shelf of his library stood two bandboxes and a hatbox lined with deep erudition, which he would not exchange for all the beavers in Great Britain. He derived exquisite pleasure from the broad-sheets that it was the custom to paste on the walls of bed-chambers in English country houses, and could not 'for his heart' leave a room before he had thoroughly studied these papers whereon the old songs and poems were set forth.

When the first edition of the 'Reliques' appeared, its reception fell very far short of its merits. Warburton inquired sneeringly 'whether Percy was the man who wrote about the Chinese?' and declared that antiquarianism was to letters what funguses are to the oak. Johnson amused Mrs. Thrale and her friends by caricaturing the old legendary stories in the following rhyme:

> The tender infant, meek and mild,
> Fell down upon a stone;
> The nurse took up the squealing child,
> But still the child squeal'd on.

However, Percy found, like Cowper, whom the 'Critical Review' had dubbed a dunce, that neither friend nor foe can intermeddle much, or long, with the joy of a true poet. Though Dr. Johnson declared that 'a mere antiquarian is a rugged being,' yet he allowed that 'Percy's attention to poetry gave grace and splendour to his studies of antiquity.' He appeared to encourage the work, but Percy found that he was 'indifferent enough to the whole scheme,' and even expressed a doubt whether the 'Reliques' might not

be placed in the same category as the poems of Ossian. As it was to his friendship that Percy 'owed many hints for the conduct of his work,' and the manuscript had also been submitted to his inspection, this want of confidence seems incredible. In the preface to the 'Reliques' a public appeal was made to Dr. Johnson, which was never contradicted and ought to have silenced all doubt as to the existence of the manuscript.[1]

Though Percy received only a hundred guineas for the first edition of the work, it was republished in 1767, 1775, and in 1794, and the profits increased considerably.

Dibdin tells us that Percy's 'Reliques' were no sooner out than the critics roared aloud for a sight of the manuscript, and among these roarers no one opened his mouth so widely or sent forth a more hideous yell than Joseph Ritson. Like Alexander the Great, he drew his tremendous sabre and cut the Gordian knot—by denying the existence of the manuscript, thereby implying that Dr. Percy had foisted a lie upon the public; and continued 'roaring away,' a sceptic almost to the end of his life.

Joseph Richardson, whose mode of spelling made his printer groan, shortened for convenience his own name to Ritson. He was a most learned but militant antiquary, whose wonderful accuracy in all his work made him intolerant of the slightest inaccuracy in that of others. His principal work was his collection of the 'Robin Hood Ballads.'

In the article in the 'Edinburgh Review,' referred to above, we are told that 'Ritson was the first to

[1] It had been for a year in the possession of Mr. Nichols, and had been seen by many of the literary men of the day.

approach the old ballads in the spirit of a scholar.' Sir Walter Scott, whose good humour and courtesy enabled him to overcome the difficulties of dealing with this rather fiery pedant, sought his help in his 'Border Minstrelsy,' and thus refers to the infirmities of his friend's disposition and his intolerant vegetarianism :

> As bitter as gall, and as sharp as a razor,
> And feeding on herbs, as a Nebuchadnezzar.

At one time Percy had intended to leave his old manuscript to Ritson ; but he altered his will, for the controversy between them grew warmer as the difference became more insignificant, and was carried on with extreme loss of temper on both sides. That 'the reverend editor and the accurate antiquary' should fight over such a trifling matter amazed Sir Walter Scott. Ritson strove to maintain the superiority of the later ballad-writers, who gave a reason for their statements, over the earlier minstrels who exacted unquestioning faith. He allowed the 'Reliques' to be one of the most delightful books that had ever been written, while he charged the editor with fabricating an ingenious fraud. Though this accusation was indignantly denied, Percy pleaded guilty to emending 'the barbarous productions of unpolished ages,' and admitted that he had 'by a few modern additions endeavoured to atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems.' He indeed showed less discernment as to the value of his work than his detractor, for he apologised to Dr. Birch for mentioning his name in the preface to 'such a strange collection of trash.'

Thackeray knew nothing more cheering than friendship between famous men, and advised his readers to frequent the company of their betters, not necessarily

'the pretty fellows from White's or the members of the Court,' but of those who regard the world more largely and generously than common men do. From such intercourse these two learned antagonists, Percy and Ritson, were in their lifetime debarred, but no doubt they will 'one day meet,' as others of whom Pope thus wrote to Swift, 'when much of the old man in them has been altered, like the righteous in the millennium, quite at peace, divested of all former passions, smiling at past follies, and content to enjoy the kingdom of the just in tranquillity.'

Percy's admirers begged him to be more liberal of his own verses, such as the 'Friar of Orders Grey,' and compared his essays on the ballads to 'charming young waiting-maids attending old haggard dowdies of quality.' One of them longed for a ray of Chatterton's genius. 'Had I this,' he exclaimed, 'I should send you a roll ten yards long of worm-eaten vellum, which should here and there exhibit a legible distich, in hopes that you would tambour on it silver and gold of your own property.'

Sir Walter Scott claims to have observed stricter fidelity to the originals than Percy, and to this Lockhart attributes what he considered the unquestionable superiority of the 'Minstrelsy' to the 'Reliques' as a faithful picture of manners. But Sir George Douglas tells us that Sir Walter Scott 'was himself the most arbitrary and least scholastic of men in his treatment of the ballads.' He did not scruple 'to construct, from various versions of a ballad, a version which should please himself.' He emended and interpolated and delighted, like Percy, 'in all that tended to the greater glory of his house.' This treatment, we are told, 'can only be justified on the ground of collaboration,' for

'though neither in pathos nor in power of direct narrative was Scott equal to the best of the old ballad-makers' . . . yet he was 'akin to them, and one with them in spirit.' We are told that even 'in Scott's day literary men had not yet begun to realise the sacredness of history, and it was only in the case of a plebeian like Chatterton, or an adventurer such as Ireland, that literary forgery was severely discountenanced. Among gentlemen it passed as a pleasant *tour de force* in antiquarian attainment.'

And, surely, if Scott is to be pardoned for his indiscretion in tampering with his literary text on the score of his great services to the ballads, Percy, to whose work he attributed his inspiration, may likewise be forgiven. As Sir George Douglas reminds us, imagination 'is no less essential to the writer of history than it is to the poet.'

Sir Walter Scott always acknowledged that the editorial part of his work in the 'Border Minstrelsy' was an attempt to imitate the plan and style of Percy's 'Reliques.' He had from infancy delighted in legendary lore, and his joy was indescribable when, as a lad of thirteen, he found that the tales of his childhood had been treated by an authority of Percy's high literary standing as a serious matter for research. Forgetful of the dinner hour, he would pore over the 'Reliques' with increasing enthusiasm and overwhelm his schoolfellows, and all who would listen to him, with tragic recitations from Percy's ballads. When he could scrape a few shillings together he bought a copy of the book and read it continually, seated under a huge oriental plane-tree that grew in a garden at Kelso, literally overhanging the river Tweed. To this period he could also trace his first awakening to the beauties of nature,

for the grandeur of the scenery, full of histories and legends, associated itself with the romantic feelings that the poems had aroused, and added intense reverence to his admiration for them.

In 1800 Sir Walter Scott submitted for Bishop Percy's inspection two of his compositions,[1] in the style of the ancient Scottish ballads, as a token of his respect and gratitude for the work on which he had formed his taste for ballad-making. He was much gratified by the approbation they met with, and by the Bishop finding time to transcribe some verses for him at a moment of much hurry and interruption caused by the disturbances that affected his diocese during the Irish Rebellion. Beyond this there does not seem to have been much communication between the two poets, who belonged to different generations. However, their followers attempted to start a rivalry between them, which, in the light of the widely different way in which their fame has lived, seems incredible; and when a new edition of the 'Northern Antiquities' was called for in 1805, Mr. Longman declared that Bishop Percy's name as editor would carry more weight in the literary world than that of Walter Scott, as 'it was of higher estimation with the public at large.' Dr. Anderson,[2] in retailing this to Percy, added that in his opinion the 'Border Ballads' were not entitled to be placed on the same shelf as the 'Reliques.' No wonder that the Bishop answered 'I beg all compliments may be discontinued in our future correspondence.' The existence of a literary cabal, of which Sir Walter Scott was the idol, appeared evident to the admirers of Bishop Percy,

[1] 'The Eve of St. John' and 'Glenfinlas.'

[2] Formerly physician at Alnwick. He wrote *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain*, a work that included the Elizabethan poets.

and produced an imaginary jealousy and coldness of which no doubt the principals were unconscious.

Thomas Percy was also attacked 'tooth and nail' by Mr. Tytler, of Woodhouselee, in Midlothian, another collector of ballads, whose 'vinegar and mustard made criticism a nauseous dish.' 'The Scots are a wayward race,' wrote an enthusiastic Irish supporter of Percy's. 'Whichever of them first chose for the emblem of their nation that excrescence of a hungry soil, that prickly weed, the thistle, had a happy turn for devices. You could defeat him in ten lines. I am really on fire at your Lordship's apathy. Shall a Percy be insulted by a Scot? Your ancestors will start from their graves, shake your curtains in the night, and chide your degeneracy. Oh! that the man's name were Douglas! That, I think, would rouse you.'

Stung by doubts of his word, Percy, to the end of his life, refused to allow the curious old volume to be seen; and in the same spirit his daughter, Mrs. Isted, to whom it passed at his death, and the representatives of her husband's family, refused to satisfy the inquiries of the antiquaries with regard to it. Dibdin alone was allowed a sight of it when he visited, in the winter of 1815, 'the hospitable owners of Ecton Hall.' The snow was on the ground, the air was sharp and biting, and the hours of daylight few. 'At such a season and in such a mansion,' he said, 'what could be more delightful than sitting by the side of a blazing fire, inspecting the very manuscript which formed the basis of the Bishop's celebrated "Reliques," published for the first time in 1765 in three crown octavo volumes?' His attempt to make notes was, however, at once stopped by his host and hostess.

Sir Walter Scott maintained that it would only be

doing justice to the Bishop's memory that it should be known to what extent Percy used the licence of an editor, but his desire to see the volume was not granted. In order to establish the existence of the mythical folio, Sir Joshua Reynolds introduced it into a fine portrait of Bishop Percy, in which he is represented in his robes holding the manuscript in his hand. Though the engravings of this picture are well known, the present whereabouts of the portrait itself has baffled all inquiries. Dibdin found that the real volume was not 'as that dexterous artist represented it, a folio most picturesquely curling at the corners, but a narrow half-bound book, with blue paper sides and brown leather back.' This 'shabby, scrubby folio MS.,' which measures about 15½ inches long by 5½ inches wide, and about 2 inches thick, he described as 'something like a tradesman's day-book.' Every page has a margin to the left of about 1½ inch in width, marked with a perpendicular line. The poetry occupies the right side of the margin. In an ancient hand is prefixed 'Curious old ballads which occasionally I have met with.' The following memorandum, signed 'T. Percy,' and dated 'Northumberland House, November 7, 1769,' is added to the volume:

'This very curious old MS., in its present mutilated state, but unbound and sadly torn, I rescued from destruction and begged at the hands of my worthy friend, Humphrey Pitt, of Shifnal, in Shropshire. I saw it lying dirty on the floor under a bureau in the parlour, being used by the maids to light the fire. It was afterwards sent, most unfortunately, to an ignorant bookseller, who pared the margin when I put it into boards in order to lend it to Dr. Johnson.'

After his elevation to the episcopal bench, Bishop

Percy almost wished to forget that he had edited the 'Reliques' and had qualms of conscience as to whether his energies had been well directed 'in bestowing any attention on a parcel of old ballads.' He hoped that the names of so many men of learning and character, being associated with his own, would guard him from unfavourable censure. He viewed with more complacency his translation of the 'Song of Solomon,' that 'ballad of ballads' as it has been called, and also his 'Key to the New Testament.' In like manner Sir Walter Scott's old tutor lamented that so promising a pupil should have wasted so much time in researches about fairies, witches and ghosts, and though assured that his works were of a higher and purer kind than most romances, he never could be persuaded to read them. From the days of Sidney to those of Wordsworth, poetry was always looked upon 'as a dangerous form of temptation.' Even Pope and Scott apologised for spending their time so idly in making verses. But surely Bede portrayed the true spirit of poetry and music when he wrote: 'It is of all arts the most laudable, pleasant, joyous and amiable; and by its power renders man brave, liberal, courteous and agreeable.' There was nothing for a bishop to repent of in the furtherance of this divine art, but, like Hannah More, Percy considered the suppression of God's best gifts as an act of merit.

Percy's friends regretted that his episcopal character prevented his adding fresh volumes to the 'Reliques,' and represented to him that the 'inditing of dulcet ditties was in nought misbeseeming to a mitred clerk.' 'Works of innocent entertainment, unmixed with poison,' they urged, 'are of greater benefit than those dealing with theology, that are seldom read, except by

people who little need them.' Numerous prelates who had courted the Muses were quoted in defence of this argument. Heliodorus wrote a romance, Vida, Bembo, Sadolet and Barberini were poets. Among our own bishops were Still (author of our first comedy, 'Gammer Gurton's Needle'), also Bale, Hall, Corbet, Sprat, Atterbury, Louth, Barnard, etc.

Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, nephew of Ina, King of Wessex, composed ballads and sang them in all the fairs of his diocese, accompanying himself on the harp with music of his own composition. Yet this 'Right Reverend ballad-singer' was the most respectable personage of his day. Dunstan, 'a Saint by title, and by trade an Archbishop,' was celebrated for his eminence as a harper.

Percy declared that his 'Reliques' only served as a relaxation from graver studies, and pleaded that he had taken up these trifles, as other grave men do cards, to unbend and amuse the mind. He hoped he need not be ashamed of having bestowed some of his idle hours on the ancient literature of his country, and wished only to be regarded as a well-intentioned clergyman who desired to impress seriously on his brethren the important duties of their function. Therefore he begged his booksellers, whenever they entertained their readers with extracts from a book which was the innocent amusement of his leisure hours twenty or thirty years ago, not in future to exhibit such extracts as the production of the present *Bishop of Dromore* in capitals, as if it was his recent publication. He equally desired that nothing might now be said about it. 'Any apology would make the matter worse.'

It was furthermore represented to Bishop Percy that, as it was out of his power to unpublish the 'Reliques,'

an augmented edition could not 'desecrate him one hair's breadth more,' and that the original title-page of the work might be preserved and the mitre kept out of sight. To this the Bishop answered, from Dromore, in 1784:

'I received with pleasure and surprise your flattering remarks on an old publication of mine, which, after 20 years, I might reasonably have expected had been forgotten. You would deserve my best thanks, if you were not tempting me to review with too much complacency the sins and follies of my youth, by finding me a salve in the precedent of my good brother of Sherborne.'

Wordsworth, who, through the influence of the ballads, was the first of our modern poets to return to nature and truth, declared that the poetry of England had been absolutely redeemed by Percy's 'Reliques,' while that of Germany, as shown in the works of Goethe, Schiller, and Heine, was greatly influenced by that work.

Of the rise and fall of the ballads, Sir George Douglas tells us that a century ago 'they were the height of the fashion, and contributed more than aught else to the Romantic revival in our literature. In "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" Scott owed his success to the action and adventure . . . of a story told with the clearness and rapidity characteristic of the ballad poetry . . . . In "The Revenge" Tennyson proved that he had it within him to write a stirring ballad . . . but in his other poems he led the public into paths of introspection, philosophy and poetic art . . . as far removed from ballad primitiveness as anything well could be.' As one who has passed his life in the land of the ballads, and has contributed to their preservation, Sir George

assures us that they are 'at the present time neglected, and, as far as the life of the people is concerned, are fast becoming a dead letter . . . but their strength and beauty must remain immortal, for they speak the pure language of the human heart, and are firmly rooted in human nature itself.'

In 1840 the 'Percy Society' was founded in commemoration of Bishop Percy, for the publication of ballad poetry. Lord Braybrooke was its first president. It was dissolved in 1852.

CHAPTER V

1766–1768

It was to the publication of the 'Reliques' that Thomas Percy owed his introduction to Sir Hugh Smithson, then Earl of Northumberland, created in 1766 the first Duke of Northumberland who was connected with the house of Percy. The title had previously been held by a Dudley in 1551. Sir Hugh married in 1740 Lady Elizabeth Seymour, who through the female line represented the Percy family and inherited their northern estates. Her grandmother, Lady Elizabeth Percy, was the only child of Josceline, Earl of Northumberland, 'and being so great an heiress she was married three times whilst yet a minor.' When scarcely twelve years of age she was bestowed with her fortunes on Henry Cavendish, Earl of Ogle, son and heir of the Duke of Newcastle, 'the saddest creature that could have been found, of idiotic mind and inhuman ugliness.' She never saw him after the ceremony and he died abroad six months later. She was next married, or rather sold, to Thomas Thynne of Longleat, a wealthy commoner, popularly known as 'Tom of Ten Thousand,' whom, until her wedding day, she had never seen. From revelations concerning him that were made to her on the morning of her marriage, she resolved to leave him at the church door and fly to Holland, whence nothing would induce her to return until she heard that he was dead. Thomas Thynne was shot in Pall Mall in 1682 by Count Charles

Königsmarck, and the detractors of Lady Ogle, among whom was Dean Swift,[1] accused the unhappy lady of prompting the murder of her husband by encouraging his assailant with hopes of marrying his rich widow. Time showed that this calumny was without foundation, and four years later Königsmarck was killed at Argos, fighting against the Turks.

Charles Seymour, sixth Duke of Somerset, next confidently presented himself, followed by a train of friends, lackeys, postillions and outriders, and supported by the conscious advantage of his youth, good looks and position; but the young widow of sixteen, weary of matrimony, refused to see him, and it was not until he returned, attended by a single servant, that she could be persuaded to give him a hearing. Even then she declared she had resolved not to alter her condition and desired 'that his Grace would think no more of the matter.' However, by the alternate threats and arguments of her indomitable old grandmother, the Dowager Lady Northumberland, in whose presence she was never allowed to sit down without leave, she was persuaded to alter her determination. This old lady lived, surrounded by all the etiquette of the old peerage, near the upper end of St. James's Street, in the house since occupied by 'White's.'

Charles Seymour's honours had fallen to him very unexpectedly, and his early training had not fitted him to bear them with the sense and good taste of those 'to the manner born.' Horace Walpole ridiculed his pomposity, which was a form of madness, and declared that, 'being a man of very low education, his pride showed

[1] Swift's aspersions on the character of Lady Ogle, afterwards Duchess of Somerset, reached the ears of Queen Anne and deprived him of all chance of promotion.

itself in a very indecent manner.' He never permitted his children to remain seated in his presence, and his daughters were compelled to stand beside his chair while he dozed. Awaking suddenly and discovering that one of them had sat down, he told her that her undutiful conduct would cost her £20,000, which he accordingly deducted from her fortune. When his second wife ventured to tap him on the shoulder, he remarked 'Madam, my first wife was a Percy, and she never took such a liberty.' One advantage the 'Proud Duke' might indeed boast, above several of his compeers, for the lady to whose attractions his family owed its sudden rise to the highest ranks of the peerage was at least the lawful Queen of England, although her elevation had cost Anne Boleyn her head. She moreover enjoyed the proud distinction of dying quietly in her bed from natural causes; for Jane Seymour alone among the wives of Henry VIII. made her exit at a well-chosen moment, without compelling her lord and master to hasten the hand of time, or to invalidate an existing marriage in order that another lady might share his throne.

Being devoid of education himself, the Duke of Somerset set little value on literary fame, and notified to Addison that he designed him for the honour of instructing his son and heir, Lord Hertford. But the offer was indignantly declined. Happily, Lord Hertford proved to be the very reverse of his father, whose tyranny he resented, and his wife was one of the most charming and cultivated women of her day. She was revered as a saint by all the 'Bas Bleu' circle, and her letters as Frances, Duchess of Somerset, were published in 1805. Thomson, in the dedication of his 'Seasons,' addressed her as

'O Hertford, fitted or to shine in Courts . . .'

and, together with Shenstone and Savage, he was invited to assist her in her studies at Alnwick, which the old Duke had grudgingly placed at his son's disposal.

A manuscript account by a member of their household describes the idyllic life led by Lord and Lady Hertford and their two children, Lord Beauchamp and Lady Betty Seymour. At the age of twenty-two Lady Betty fell in love with Sir Hugh Smithson, a Yorkshire baronet, whose great-grandfather had been a haberdasher in Cheapside. He had himself succeeded somewhat unexpectedly to the family estates, and, as the son of a younger branch of the family, had begun life as an apothecary in Hatton Garden. He, however, 'threw physic to the dogs,' and being one of the handsomest men of his generation and possessed of high intellect and education, with a very advantageous manner, he pushed his way through life by immediately attacking all obstacles that stood in his way. He therefore addressed himself directly to Lady Betty, who, conscious that she had much to offer in addition to herself, had already taken a somewhat active part in the matter. Some obliging friend conveyed to Sir Hugh the extreme surprise expressed by Lady Betty on hearing that his addresses had been rejected elsewhere. Her own refusal, when he consequently turned his attentions in her direction, was but half-hearted and hesitating; her head was, as she expressed it, in such a 'puzzleation' that she could only console herself with the thought that Sir Hugh was far from suspecting the impression he had made. He seems, however, to have possessed more penetration than she gave him credit for, and was not slow to follow up his advantage.

Before giving their consent, Lord and Lady Hert-

ford submitted Lady Betty's constancy to the test of a six months' separation, during which time she was free to indulge in a broken heart without the necessity of concealing any of its outward manifestations; consequently her altered appearance quickly reduced her parents to submission. Much had to be evaded, in the statement laid before the old Duke of Somerset, as to the origin of the Smithson family, before his consent to his granddaughter's marriage could be obtained; but happily he considered the disposal of a mere girl was hardly worthy of his attention. All his hopes were fixed on her brother, Lord Beauchamp; therefore he answered with indifference that he knew nothing of Sir Hugh Smithson or his fortune, but if his family was gentlemanly, and the settlements ample, he should not object. The young couple hastened to avail themselves of this ungracious permission, and Lady Betty Smithson soon accommodated herself to the tastes of her husband's family by paying her respects to Mr. Smithson of Tottenham High Cross (to whose large fortune Sir Hugh was heir), arrayed in silver stuff costing £4 a yard, and on her head Horace Walpole declared she wore such a pyramid of baubles that she reminded him of the Princess of Babylon in Grammont's 'Mémoires.'

Four years later, through the death of her brother, Lord Beauchamp, Lady Betty was suddenly transformed into the greatest heiress in the kingdom. Horace Walpole said that, if it were not for the terrible grief of Lord and Lady Hertford in losing their only son, he would not be sorry for such a 'mortification of the pride of old Somerset.' The Duke took the blow more in anger than in sorrow, and even attempted to defraud Lady Betty of her rights, by petitioning the

SIR HUGH SMITHSON, BART.
Created First Duke of Northumberland.

King to confer on him the Earldom of Northumberland, with a special remainder to his favourite grandson, Sir Charles Wyndham. Fortunately his design was frustrated, though he left the Percy estates of Petworth and Leconfield by will to the Wyndhams, who also inherited the Earldom of Egremont.

The Earldom of Northumberland was, in 1749, conferred on Lord Hertford, who had in the meanwhile succeeded as seventh Duke of Somerset, with the remainder to Sir Hugh Smithson and his wife. He died in 1750, and the first step taken by his successors was to assume the name and arms of Percy. When men do well for themselves, the world speaks well of them; but there is a limit to the success the world will tolerate, and Walpole, who formerly admired the good breeding of Sir Hugh, now described 'Earl Smithson' as a vulgar upstart, and declared that the old nobility was degraded by the bestowal of the blue ribbon upon a person of obscure descent. His sudden rise created a host of detractors, and he was said to have greeted the Duke of Queensberry's eldest son at Alnwick with an allusion to its being the first time that a Douglas and a Percy had met there in friendship.

Nor did Walpole spare Lady Betty, who had now become Countess of Northumberland. She was, he declared, 'a jovial lump of contradictions, familiar with the mob, whilst stifled with diamonds, and attentive to the most minute privileges of her rank, whilst shaking hands with a cobbler.' Her love of display he considered 'ostentatious,' for the length of her retinue exceeded that of Queen Caroline, and her frank good nature he described as 'junketatious.' Both these traits were, however, only different manifestations of the spirit of her old grandfather, from whose pomposity,

in accordance with the laws of action and re-action, she naturally rebounded, and the consciousness of her historic descent on the maternal side secured her from any fear of criticism.

In 1763, on Lord Northumberland's appointment as Lord Lieutentant, 'they transported their jovial magnificence to Ireland, where their vice-majesties scattered pearls and diamonds about the streets.' Open house was kept at Dublin Castle, and eating, drinking, and gambling were the order of the day.

But behind all this apparent extravagance Lord Northumberland was in reality a shrewd man of business, and he took care that the supply should more than equal the demand. His extensive outlay was carefully regulated, and his generosity consisted largely in his judicious manner of bestowing favours. When he succeeded to the northern estates of the Percys, they were little better than a waste. The buildings were in ruins, the trees were cut down, and the land had gone out of cultivation; magnificent forests had been destroyed during the Border wars. In the first twenty years of his vigorous administration mines were developed, cottages rebuilt, marshy lands drained and reclaimed, and twelve thousand trees planted, while flowers and fruit trees were imported from foreign lands. In less than thirty years the rent-roll rose from £8000 to £50,000, while the extent of the property and the prosperity of the tenants increased.

At Alnwick, on the brow of the hill, in all its strength and beauty stood the magnificent old castle with its air of vast grandeur; but, with the exception of the short residence of Lord and Lady Hertford, it had not been inhabited by a descendant of the Percys for more than a hundred years, and a school had been kept with-

in its ruined walls. Owing, however, to its historic associations Lord and Lady Northumberland chose it as a residence rather than Warkworth, which for beauty of situation is unrivalled. Though the castle was restored in the pseudo-Gothic style, it suffered less than many old buildings from renovation, which often proves more fatal than wilful destruction. Much of its original character was allowed to remain as it had been in the time of Hotspur, though the rooms were enlarged and many more added. But the stern mediaeval grandeur of the interior was marred by the stucco decorations of Italian artists unfitted for a Border castle, and the gardens which were 'trim in the highest degree' appeared to Pennant more suited to the villa of a rich citizen than to the ancient stronghold of a great baron. This adverse criticism led, as we shall see, to the famous quarrel between Dr. Johnson and Thomas Percy. Pennant objected that the magnificence of the towers was injured by the 'number of rude statues' crowded on the battlements. These quaint stone figures in warlike dress and attitude, ready to thrust, shoot, or fling, with sword, javelin, arrows, and stones, might have proved useful in time of Border strife, by impressing the enemy with the strength of the garrison, but could be of no avail against the friendly nation who gave England her king, still continues to supply her leading statesmen, and governs her in so tactful a manner that she imagines herself to be the ruler.

Though the old order had given place to the new, the ancient tradition of the house was maintained by three minstrels who bore the badge of the Percys—a silver crescent—on their right arm, and blew their small Northumberland bagpipes, unlike their Scottish neighbours, by means of bellows. Pennant failed to

notice these picturesque bards and lamented the former grandeur of the feudal age. The grey-headed porter, whom he had expected to conduct him to the hall of entertainment, was replaced by a valet eager to receive a fee. He looked in vain for the trophies of the prowess and chivalry of the Percys, for the helms and hauberks, or spoils of the chase, nor could he discern a helmet hanging on the tower, which was the ancient sign of hospitality to travellers. These things could no more be restored than the venerable oaks and extensive forests, for whose destruction the new owners were in no way responsible, and whose beauty they were doing their utmost to restore. They employed 'Capability Brown,' the famous eighteenth-century landscape gardener, to clothe the hills with trees, and plant the valleys with young forests. The parks were extended and enclosed with high walls.

Building and restoration was also being carried on at Northumberland House, Stanwick, Warkworth and Sion, which Lord Northumberland 'had formed into a villa, scarce to be paralleled in Europe.' Here magnificence was controlled by the exquisite taste of Adam, who made 'a gateway and screen, all lace and embroidery, as *croquant* as his frames for the tables.' 'From Kent's mahogany,' sighed Horace Walpole, 'we are dwindled to Adam's filigree.' The gallery was converted into a museum; 'in short,' sneered Walpole, as he summed up the extravagance of the Northumberlands, 'they will soon have no estate.' But with his usual business capacity Lord Northumberland met his expenses in a manner that proved singularly inconvenient to his neighbours, including Walpole himself. In order to raise his rents he obtained an Act of Parliament to erect corn-mills within two miles of Twickenham,

which he afterwards converted into *powder* mills. They finally blew up, demolishing four of Horace Walpole's stained-glass windows, and threatening to reduce his castle at Strawberry Hill to the level of Troy.

Lord Northumberland showed his loyalty to the House of Hanover by entertaining on July 5, 1764, fifteen hundred guests to celebrate the King's birthday. His hospitality made him very popular with his country neighbours and dependents, who wrote an ode on the celebration of his own birthday, of which the following verse is a specimen:

> Obedient to the friendly call,
> Join the Chorus in the Hall;
> Northumberland! to us is giv'n,
> The Friend of Man, the care of Heav'n.
>
> Chorus: Joyful all—we now obey
> And celebrate *our* Percy's Day.

When Lord Northumberland was dismissed from the Viceroyalty of Ireland in favour of his wife's kinsman, Lord Hertford, who also supplanted him as Lord Chamberlain, Pitt advised him to ask for a step in the peerage, believing that a marquisate would satisfy him, but to his practical mind it appeared advisable to secure a dukedom at once. As it was fifty years since any but royal dukedoms had been conferred, the King granted this request after much hesitation, on the condition that any children that the new Duke might have by a second marriage should be merely Smithsons. Content with his jovial Duchess, the Duke readily agreed to leave such possible contingencies to take their chance, while Lord Cardigan, who might at the same moment have secured a dukedom on the strength of his wife being the heiress of the Montagus, let fall the substance for the shadow.

The older earls were much offended by this sudden rise and renewed the old taunts, which were received by Duke Hugh with imperturbable good humour. Having nothing more to gain, he openly expressed the sympathy he had always felt for the American colonists, voted against the Stamp Act, and afterwards in favour of its repeal. So strongly did he oppose the American War that he endeavoured to compel his eldest son to retire from the army at the commencement of hostilities. Lord Percy, though sharing his father's views, felt bound in honour to lead his regiment to the front. He did good service, for he looked after the commissariat and opposed corporal punishment. He obtained leave for his regiment to be called 'the Northumberland Fusiliers,' and after the battle of Bunker's Hill, where it was well-nigh cut to pieces, he sent home at his own expense the widows of those who had fallen.

Lord Percy was member for Westminster from 1764, and was opposed at the General Election by a nominee of Wilkes. In 'her Grace of Northumberland Wilkes met with a heroine to stem the tide of his victories,' for she sat at a window in Covent Garden haranguing the mob, and was hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. Walpole, who was obliged to admit her popularity, could only account for it in the way that Charles II. did for that of a very foolish preacher, who always contrived to carry his hearers with him, viz. that he supposed 'his nonsense suited their nonsense.'

During the Wilkes' riots the mob compelled the Duke and Duchess to appear at the windows of Northumberland House, and publicly drink the health of the popular hero, while providing the rioters with beer for the same purpose. The Duke had incurred public displeasure by having used all his

influence as Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex against Wilkes. In 1770 he supported Chatham's resolution, condemning Lord North's advice to the King not to receive the 'remonstrance and petition' of the Corporation of London on the subject of the Middlesex election.

During the Gordon riots, in which his second son, Lord Algernon Percy, distinguished himself, the Duke was assaulted and robbed by the mob. He lost his watch in the hurly-burly, while his companion was robbed of his snuff-box and spectacles. Lord Ashburnham had been torn from his chariot, and the Bishop of Lincoln ill-treated. The rioters diswigged Lord Bathurst, and, with more zeal than logic, told him that he was 'the Pope, and an old woman.' The House of Lords descended from its usual dignity, and became an 'asylum of lamentable objects.' Lords Hillsborough, Stormont, and Townshend had lost their bag-wigs, and their hair lay dishevelled about their ears, Lord Willoughby was without his periwig, and Lord Mansfield, whose glasses had been broken, sat quivering on the woolsack like an aspen. Though the wig may lend an air of dignity and wisdom in the calm hours of leisure, in moments of agitation and unrest, locks, however poor and scanty, that can at their worst do no more than stand on end, are of inestimable value to their original owner.

The Duchess of Northumberland showed some literary taste; one of her poems has been given to the world. The French fashion of 'Bouts Rimés' had become 'very tonnish' among the 'quality' at Bath, although it was laughed at in London. Every Thursday the water-drinkers were invited by Lady Miller at Batheaston to draw out of a Roman vase, decked with pink ribbons, rhymes, upon which they were expected to

produce poems of their own composition. Six competent judges awarded the prize, and the winner, kneeling at the feet of the fair hostess, kissed her hand and was crowned with myrtles. The Duchess 'got very jollily through her task,' but as the competing poets were only permitted to adjust lines with some sort of cadence to the rhyming terminations that had been served out to them the week before, her Grace must not be held responsible for attempting to make 'puffing' rhyme with 'muffin,' to which certain captious critics might object. To read these lines with appreciation we must approach them with the spirit of Dr. Johnson. When told that an acquaintance wrote for Lady Miller's vase, without a moment's hesitation he pronounced him to be 'a blockhead for his pains,' but when it was added that the Duchess had also contributed, he replied 'Sir, the Duchess of Northumberland may do what she pleases; nobody will say anything to a lady of her high rank.'

Therefore, for the following lines the Duchess was crowned:

The pen which I now take and brandish
Has long lain useless in my standish;
Know every maid from her in patten
To her who shines in glossy satin,
That could they now prepare an olio,
From best receipt of book in folio,
Ever so fine for all their puffing
I should prefer a buttered muffin;
A muffin Jove himself might feast on,
If eat with Miller at Batheaston.

To this good-natured lady, as a patron of literature, Thomas Percy dedicated[1] his 'Reliques,' and in a

[1] Thomas Percy honestly acknowledged that this dedication owed its finest strokes to the pen of Dr. Johnson, and declared that he could no longer allow himself to strut about in borrowed feathers.

letter written from Dublin Castle in 1764, she declared herself to be 'obliged and honoured by so flattering a compliment.'

Like a good wife the Duchess of Northumberland put her husband's convenience before any other earthly consideration, and rather than that his dinner should be spoiled, she was quite willing that all her friends should starve. On one occasion Horace Walpole arrived at Northumberland House at the appointed dinner hour, four o'clock, and found that the Duke was detained at the House. The assembled guests discussed the wind and the weather, they talked of the opera, the plays, Cornelys' and Almack's, and every topic they could think of till seven o'clock, when their coaches were announced. They sent them away, but in spite of all hints and representations the heart of their hostess did not relent, and not one word of apology or hope did she give until eight o'clock, when she ordered dinner. This proved to be only a fresh expedient for gaining time. At 8.30 they at last sat down to a table of fourteen covers, but instead of 'substantials,' they found only 'a profusion of coloured plates.' 'My Lady Finlater,' poor simple soul, 'who had never seen these embroidered dinners,' nor dined later than three o'clock, was famished. The first and second courses were spun out in hopes of the Duke's arrival, but in vain. The 'middle dish,' which promised more substantial fare, had at length been put on the table, when Lord Finlater arrived, so the first and second ornamental courses were brought back again, and just as they were again about to reach the 'middle course,' the Duke arrived, and the whole dinner had to begin again for the third time. The original party almost 'dropped from their chairs with fumes and fatigue.' When the clock

struck eleven they were invited to return to the drawing-room and drink tea and coffee; but Horace Walpole, excusing himself on the plea of a supper engagement, went home to bed.

In addition to 'occasional private mobs' held by the Duchess, she also gave fêtes, when the gardens were illuminated with arches and pyramids of light, while a 'necklace of lamps' and 'spiral obelisk of candles' made quite a fairy scene. Little bands of kettledrums, clarionets, and pipes enlivened the company, while 'the lovely moon who came without a card' looked calmly down on these puny human efforts.

In 1766 Thomas Percy was appointed tutor to the Duke of Northumberland's younger son, Lord Algernon Percy, in succession to Dr. Dodgson,[1] who had become Bishop of Ossory. The promotion of his predecessor caused Percy's friends to anticipate that without its actually 'raining mitres' one would soon fall on his head, and that by his ballads he would 'sing himself into a stall if not a throne.' 'Although from a man of his abilities' they assured him 'lawn sleeves would receive more dignity than they were capable of conferring, yet they would enable him to enjoy *otium cum dignitate*.'

In 1770 Thomas Percy took his degree of D.D. at Cambridge. Dr. Percy's attendance at Alnwick, where he was afterwards appointed chaplain to the new Duke of Northumberland, prevented his continuing an edition of the 'Spectator' and 'Guardian,' and also of the 'Tatler,' which he had undertaken for Tonson; but it led to his compiling a work that 'revealed the early English domestic life' as clearly as the 'Reliques' had done the early English literature. 'The Household

[1] Ancestor of Lewis Carroll.

Book of the Earl of Northumberland in 1512 at his Castles of Wressle and Leconfield in Yorkshire' was privately circulated in 1768. The Duke allowed Thomas Percy to distribute three or four volumes, but only to such persons as his Grace had some particular reason for wishing to favour. This book is a curious record of the customs of a great house in the Middle Ages, and in it, as in his other two great works, Percy had opened up a new line of research. Unlike the patron who 'looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground encumbers him with help,' the Duke proved a real friend to Thomas Percy, and the Duchess showed him unfailing kindness. They both treated him as a kinsman, therefore his life-long devotion to their family may be considered free from any suspicion of servility. Walpole declared that, 'having created himself a Percy, he went mad about the family, and wrote sheets full of inquiries about old Northumberland's letters.' He adds maliciously 'that the Percys are more remembered for having lost their heads than for ever having had a head that it was a loss to lose.' Undeterred by such criticism, Thomas Percy undertook to write the history of the family, which, at any rate in the days of chivalry, could boast of a record of which all its members might well feel proud. But Dr. Grainger defied him to vindicate the conduct of the Lord Northumberland who was long imprisoned for his connection with the Gunpowder Plot, and a veil had also to be cast over his son's ingratitude to King Charles. We are however assured that in the course of every seven hundred years each individual is descended from 3,194,302 ancestors; there must therefore necessarily be some less respectable progenitors in every family.

From Thomas Percy's elaborate family history, which he wrote at the Duke's request for Collins's peerage, 'the supposititious descents of the Smithsons were afterwards discreetly eliminated'; but in any case the Percys had every reason to be grateful to Hugh, first Duke of Northumberland, of whom Dr. Johnson had so high an opinion that he said he was 'only fit to succeed himself.' Nothing mean or dishonourable could ever be alleged against him, though, like all people in high places, he was caricatured by the wits of the day. His effective method of balancing his reckless magnificence by parsimonious economies led to the following parody of the 'Chevy Chase,' which alludes to his attempt to evade the powder tax levied on his retinue of servants, who, like their master, were so anxious to appear *sur le bon ton* that they asked leave to put themselves into mourning for Princess Caroline, daughter of George II.

CHEVY CHASE.

God prosper long our Noble King,
Our Lives and Safeties all:
A woeful Story late there did
In Britain's Isle befall.

Duke Smithson, of Northumberland,
A vow to God did make,
The choicest Gifts in fair England,
For him and his to take.

'Excise and Customs, Church and Law,
I've begg'd from *Master* Rose,
The Garter too—but still *the blues*
I'll have, or I'll oppose.'

'Now God be with him,' quoth the King,
'Sith 'twill no better be;
I trust we have within our Realm
Five hundred good as he.'

And soon a Law, like arrow keen,
Or Spear or Curtal-axe,
Struck poor Duke Smithson to the heart,
In shape of *Powder Tax.*

Sore leaning on his crutch, he cried,
'Crop, crop, my merry Men all;
No Guinea for your Heads I'll pay,
Though Church and State should fall.'

Again the Taxing-man appear'd—
No deadlier Foe could be;
A Schedule, of a cloth-yard long,
Within his hand bore he.

'Yield thee, Duke Smithson, and behold
The Assessment thou must pay;
Dogs, Horses, Houses, Coaches, Clocks,
And Servants in array.'

'Nay,' quoth the Duke, 'in thy black scroll
Deductions I espye—
For those who, poor, and mean, and low,
With Children burthen'd lie.

And tho' full Sixty Thousand Pounds
My Vassals pay to me,
From Cornwall to *Northumberland,*
Through many a fair County;

Yet England's Church, its King, its Laws,
Its Cause I value not,
Compared with this my constant text,
A penny saved is got.

No drop of Princely Percy's blood
Through these cold veins doth run;
With *Hotspur's* Castles, *blazon,* name,
I still am *poor* Smithson.

Let England's Youth unite in Arms,
And every liberal hand
With honest zeal subscribe their mite,
To save their Native Land:

I at *St. Martin's* Vestry Board
To swear shall be content,
That I have Children Eight, and claim
Deductions, Ten per Cent.'

God bless us all from Factious Foes,
And French Fraternal Kiss;
And grant the King may never make
Another *Duke* like this.

CHAPTER VI

1768–1773

None but a man of Thomas Percy's universal talents could have discharged the diverse duties that were required of him during the fifteen years that he held his appointment at Alnwick. They included those of chaplain, librarian, secretary, tutor, genealogist, political agent, landscape gardener, art-collector, and ballad-maker. To the innumerable literary engagements that formerly crowded upon him were now added the weight of the Duke's correspondence, with that 'most teasing and fatiguing of all employments,' the daily examination of some hundred begging letters, in many of which the endless 'frauds of a great city could be detected.'

To the study of heraldry Dr. Percy now found it 'proper to pay some attention,' as all questions relating to the genealogy and arms of the Percy family were referred to him. He made diligent search among old parish registers, but, like all British genealogists, his inquiries were often baffled by the fact that these records were only appointed in England in 1539, and were then carelessly kept, whole volumes being often lost. Unmindful of the ridicule with which in his days 'such dry researches were regarded,' this study soon became his favourite amusement, and led him also to trace out the histories of the Clevelands, Lowes,[1]

[1] Thomas Percy refused £6000 for an old house that he had inherited from the Lowes, in whose possession it had been since the reign of Henry III.

Blounts, Bromleys and Packingtons, from which families he was maternally descended. He also arranged the Percy genealogies that adorn the chapel at Alnwick. On one side, as Dibdin quaintly expresses it, he placed those that are 'pushed up to Charlemagne,' and on the other those 'brought from Hotspur downwards.'

Dr. Percy admitted that he suffered too much of his attention to be engrossed by these researches, which during his brief holidays often interfered with 'his proper attentions to his living relations.' On one occasion he wrote to his cousin, 'I have mentioned my shortcomings to Mrs. Percy, and as she has scolded me for them already, I hope you too will give me a discharge in full.'

He assured the Duchess that while her other friends could entertain her with gossip of what was passing in this present world, he was able to supply her with particulars concerning the doings of her ancestors in previous centuries. On one occasion, when she was absent in Paris, he employed an artist of the name of Lindo to paint 'portraits' of the first five Earls of Northumberland, whose likenesses he had gathered from various sources. A book in the Museum furnished a miniature of the first earl, and figures taken from a church window at York enabled Lindo to improve the pictures of the second earl, who defended Berwick in 1436, and of his successor, both of whom, after the tradition of their house, were killed in action. The fourth and fifth earls were also touched up from drawings copied from monuments at Beverley, the burying-place of the Percys. Thus, owing to Thomas Percy's energy and resource, the Duchess found, on her return from Paris, in the gallery at Sion, authentic portraits of her ancestors down to the reign of

Henry VIII., and it only remained to hunt up other likenesses to carry the collection on to her own time.

Amid all these avocations Dr. Percy often regretted his past life of leisure and literary amusement. He now found himself in so unsettled a state that he could hardly sit down and handle a pen, and lamented that such of his slight attempts in the *belles lettres* as had escaped 'the fire and the pastrycook' were peaceably slumbering in 'his closet in Northamptonshire, the sequestered retreat that gave them birth.' He was, however, desired by the Duchess to commemorate in verse a romantic spot in which she delighted.

In the Castle of Warkworth, where the 'Lion of Percy may be seen everywhere, for it is rampant on the keep, and still roars over the tower near the chapel porch,' the minstrels of old celebrated the valiant deeds of the family. Dr. Percy was expected to continue these records, and to such a lover of antiquity, life in the Border country, amid historic scenes of stirring events, was full of interest and poetic inspiration.

Within a mile of Warkworth Castle, on a little eminence, enclosed in a deep valley through which flows the river Coquet, may be seen one of the most curious monuments in the British Isles, the Hermitage of Warkworth. A rock embowered in woods overhangs the river, and out of the solid stone is hewn a beautiful little chapel, with its entrance and ante-chapel. This Gothic building is supported by octagon pillars branching off and forming little pointed arches. On the south side of the altar, carved in the rock, is the recumbent form of a woman, at whose feet a hermit weeps, while near the head stands an angel. At the base is a bull's head, said by Sir Walter Scott to represent a dog, the

emblem of fidelity.[1] In the small apartment that forms the entrance to the chapel are two square niches where the hermit was wont to sit and contemplate, and above the doorway is carved in Latin 'My tears have been my meat day and night.' On the other side of the chapel is a doorway leading to the ante-chapel, which also has its altar, and a recess cut in the rock to form a bed. Openings in the wall enabled the hermit, who appears to have been both priest and penitent, while praying at the altar, sitting in contemplation, or lying on his stony bed, to keep the tomb of his lady perpetually in his sight. His meditations may well have been inspired by his surroundings, for a finer solitude can hardly be imagined. From a little seat in the cloister facing the setting sun he looked down on the sweeping curve of the river Coquet with its ceaseless flow, which, like the current of his troubled life, was about to lose itself in the ocean. On the opposite bank lay the wooded slopes and cultivated lands that recalled the busy world he had forsaken.

The history of this Hermitage is a riddle that each one may interpret as he will. Tradition points to a Northumberland warrior of the time of Hotspur, who hewed this temple out of the living rock, and passed his days in prayer for the soul of his lady, to whose memory it was dedicated. Beyond this it is silent.

Percy's interpretation in his poem 'The Hermit of Warkworth' is according to his own mind and the taste of his age. In his new surroundings he had seen something of the fashionable ladies of the day, and lest

[1] This monumental form of an unknown woman has been believed by some authorities to be intended for that of the Blessed Virgin, but this supposition has been refuted by the fact that she is never represented in a recumbent position.

they should be unduly exalted by this monument of devotion, which perhaps the great white Indian 'Taj Mahal' and the tomb of Caecilia Metella in the Campagna alone can equal, his imagination created a tragic situation, caused entirely by the lady's own vanity and caprice.

Even Mrs. Montagu, who, with her *Bas Bleu* followers, was endeavouring to reform society, had written a dialogue to prove the fatal results of simplicity and truth, and to show why Cleopatra had enslaved the soul of Antony, while the faithful Berenice found herself forsaken and discarded. Her teaching, like that of most false doctrines, contains a germ of truth, though the moral excluded it from Lord Lyttelton's 'Dialogues of the Dead.' According to Mrs. Montagu, Berenice, poor honest fool, really loved Titus, and, what was worse, allowed him to find it out; therefore, like all idolaters—of whom those who bow down to wood and stone are only a type—she was suffering from the insensibility of her idol; whereas Cleopatra, who was proof against any weakness of the head or heart, was gay, haughty, gracious, proud and indifferent by turns, and, if Antony frowned, smiled on Dolabella. Berenice allowed that Cleopatra's method might be suitable in dealing with the reveller Antony, but pleaded that the wisdom and gentleness of the god-like Titus left no part of her heart free to dissemble. Her love was a reality and all her beauty and accomplishments were so dedicated to Titus that she was more proud of the homage she paid him than any she received. Not to such transparent souls do men raise marble temples and dig hermitages out of the rock.

'Indeed, Berenice,' scornfully answered Cleopatra, 'you talk more like a shepherdess than a great queen.

In the simplicity of pastoral life you might have engaged the affections of some humble swain, but there is too little art in your conduct to captivate a man used to flattery, pleasure, and variety. Antony was preserved by his doubt of my love, and Titus was lost by his confidence in yours. In every era you will find the faithful discarded, while the vain and capricious fair one is to her Antony a Cleopatra and "the world well lost."'

Imbued with these doctrines, Percy represented the hermit as one who was expiating the murder, in a moment of unreasoning jealousy, not only of his lady, but of his own brother, who in all good faith was assisting him in her deliverance from captivity.

The lady, according to Percy, shared the views of Cleopatra.

'That heart,' she said, 'is lightly priz'd
Which is too lightly won;
And long shall rue that easy maid
Who yields her love too soon.'

She consequently sent her lover a helmet and bade him use it.

'Sir knight, thy lady sends thee this,
And yields to be thy bride,
When thou hast proved this maiden gift
Where sharpest blows are tri'd.'

To humour the lady's whim a raid into Teviotdale was undertaken, where dwelt an enemy ever eager for the fray.

As when a lion in his den
Hath heard the hunter's cries,
And rushes forth to meet his foes,
So did the Douglas rise.

For a time all went well with our hero.

The vigour of his single arm
Had well-nigh won the field,
When ponderous fell a Scottish axe,
And clove his lifted shield.

Another blow his temples took,
And reft his helm in twain;
That beauteous helm, his lady's gift!
His blood bedewed the plain.

. . . . . .

Percy and Douglas, great in arms,
There all their courage show'd;
And all the field was strew'd with dead,
And all with crimson flow'd.

So, 'all pale and weltering in his gore,' Sir Bertram was borne to Warkworth Castle, where his exploits at least gained the approval of his lady's father.

'Well hast thou earn'd my daughter's love,'
Her father kindly said;
'And she herself shall dress thy wounds,
And tend thee in thy bed.'

A message went, no daughter came,
Fair Isabel ne'er appears;
'Beshrew me,' said the aged chief,
'Young maidens have their fears.'

Though such heartless conduct caused her father to use strong language, Sir Bertram was in no way daunted, and rose from his sick bed determined to visit his lady.

A brother he had in prime of youth,
Of courage firm and keen,
And he would tend him on the way
Because his wounds were green.

But they found that the lady, with all the perversity of an ill-governed mind, had repented of her folly and

pride, and had mounted 'her milk-white steed' just before their arrival.

Sir Bertram feared

> 'Some Scottish Carle hath seized my love
> And borne her to his den;
> And ne'er will I tread English ground
> Till she is restored again.'

So he disguised himself as a palmer, while his brother donned a kilt, and taking different roads they searched the Scottish hills. For many a weary day Sir Bertram watched the castle where he believed his lady to be imprisoned.

> And soon he saw his love descend,
> Wrapt in a tartan plaid,
> Assisted by a sturdy youth
> In highland garb yclad.

As the lady appeared to be a willing captive, and knowing that she was not one in whom the heart of man can safely trust, Sir Bertram, without more ado, exclaimed:

> 'Die, traitor, die!'—a deadly thrust
> Attends each furious word;
> Ah! then fair Isabel knew his voice,
> And rush'd beneath his sword.
>
> 'O stop,' she cried, 'O stop thine arm!
> Thou dost thy brother slay!'
> And here the hermit paus'd and wept:
> His tongue no more could say.

Though life with this lady would have been intolerable, after she was dead and buried Sir Bertram passed his days in worshipping at her shrine; and like the faithful Berenice, whose folly, Mrs. Montagu assures us, seventeen hundred years of weeping had failed to expiate, he continued to see with the eye of faith

visions of perfection, the beauty of which neither Cleopatra nor the lady, nor yet Mrs. Montagu, would have been able to understand.

Though the course of the river which flows beneath it be changed, yet till 'the hills be removed' this memorial, graven in the rock, whatever its significance, must endure.[1]

'The Hermit of Warkworth' was published in 1771, and Johnson allowed that Percy's long ballad 'in many fits' was 'pretty enough.'

Dr. Percy, who was said by his admirers 'to adorn everything that he touched,' was employed by the Duke to superintend the extensive improvements that were being carried out at Alnwick. We will follow him in his accustomed seven miles' round of inspection, and endeavour to see the country as it appeared to him.

From the great gate at Alnwick a wide, handsome road leads to the outwork of the castle, with its beautiful Gothic gateway ornamented with battlements and portcullis. Hence, between borders of flowering shrubs and young plantations, the path winds down a steep hill; crossing a rivulet, it descends into a deep valley, and passes under a high cliff with overhanging trees, following a running brook that, after rain, can boast of two waterfalls. From this valley the path

[1] From a scutcheon in the chapel bearing what Dr. Percy believed to be the Bertram arms, he supposed the hermit to have belonged to that family, but he scrupled to remove the green moss that covered the shield for fear of injuring the sculpture.

The bull's head on the lady's tomb, pronounced by Sir Walter Scott to be an emblem of fidelity, Percy thought might represent the crest of the Widdringtons, from which fine old race he concluded that the lady sprang. The last Lord Widdrington of Warkworth, whose ancestors are celebrated in the 'Chevy Chase,' was deprived of his title for proclaiming the Pretender at the Market Cross in 1715.

ascends through wild uncultivated hills and dales, and emerges on to a heath, on either side of which are plantations. Thence, winding through cornfields and upland pastures by a gentle ascent, a fine view is gained towards the east, with the sea on the horizon. In the midst of this beautiful landscape, with its green valleys, may be seen, standing on an eminence above the river Alne and overshadowing the town, the towers of Alnwick Castle. Ascending through wild tracts of heather and young plantations, at length the vast outlines of the Cheviots emerge from behind the intervening hills, the summit of the highest being lost in the clouds. Near this point, in a rude cave amid the clefts of the rock, it was decided that the statue of a hermit should be placed 'in suitable retirement.' The path then creeps round the edge of a vast precipice, and commands an extensive view of the country lying at an amazing depth below. At the foot of the mountain winds, with whimsical irregularities, the river Alne, whose waters were to flow into an artificial lake covering two hundred acres.

Standing on a hill on the margin of the proposed lake are the remains of Hulne Abbey; on the left rises a vast extent of wild, bare plains, with single farms or plantations scattered like islands in a boundless ocean. The eye is carried gradually over an expanse of twenty miles to the Cheviot mountains, between which may be seen, though at twice the distance, the blue hills of Teviotdale. From the edge of this high terrace the traveller crosses a level plain and ascends a circular hill known by the country-folk as Brisley hill, but by antiquaries as the British Carmel. It was clothed with young trees, though spacious avenues were designed to allow wheeled

carriages to drive to the highest point. Here the Duke proposed to erect a tower fifty feet high that would command at one glance the whole of the surrounding country with its shipping. On the margin of the ocean appears Dunstanburgh Castle and the little port of Alnemouth. To the southward rises to a considerable height a wild, rude moor which is part of the ancient forest of Haydon, which the Duke was reclothing with infant plantations that were struggling for life amid the inclemencies of their exposed situation. Here and there might be seen cairns or pyramids of stone that served as landmarks in ancient days.

Winding down to the bottom of this mountain and crossing the river the traveller finds that Hulne Abbey, which had appeared so far below his feet, is really situated at a considerable height. It was the first monastery of Carmelite Friars in these kingdoms. When William de Vescy, Lord of Alnwick, and Richard Grey, two ancient chieftains in the Christian army, went to the Holy Wars in the reign of Henry III., they found among the monks of Mount Carmel a Northumberland man, Ralph Fresborn, who had distinguished himself in a former crusade, and in consequence of a vow had adopted the monastic life. Fresborn was granted permission to return with his fellow-countrymen on condition that he founded a monastery for the Carmelites in his native land. From its striking resemblance to Mount Carmel the present spot was chosen. Henry, fourth Earl of Northumberland, who took Berwick from the Scots in 1482, built on the top of Mount Carmel a fine tower as a place of refuge for the monks during the sudden irruptions of the Borderers of both nations. This tower was restored by the Duke in the old Gothic style.

Returning towards the castle the path passes through a valley overhung with woods, and follows for two miles the winding river that sometimes glides in small canals of clear water, and at others foams down amid crags and rocks, through woods and meadows. It passes through a large shrubbery—the nursery of future plantations, in the centre of which a small overhanging grotto was destined to adorn a fine chalybeate spring. At times the eye is carried up over a succession of fine slopes till it rests on the top of Carmel, and at length Alnwick Castle once more emerges from the trees, while the battlements of the tower belonging to the once famous Priory of Alnwick are seen embowered among the foliage.

Dr. Percy attended the Duchess on a tour into Scotland, to visit the ruins of Melrose, that fine old abbey founded by David, King of Scots, in 1136. He had an appreciation of the beauties of nature that was unusual in his day. In the following letter he gives his impression of some of the country that was shortly to be made familiar to the dwellers in all lands by Sir Walter Scott, who attributed his first inspiration to the 'Reliques.' By a curious coincidence the place that arrested his attention, more than that which it was his purpose to visit, was the spot where, nearly twenty years later, Scott, at the age of thirteen, first read the 'Reliques' and 'where the meeting of two superb rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, the ruins of an ancient abbey, and the more distant remains of Roxburgh Castle, mixed and melted amongst a thousand other beauties' and harmonised with the romance of the ancient ballads.

'We entered Scotland at Coldstream, a little town which stands upon the Tweed and is famous for

having given its name to one of the regiments of Foot Guards. Hence we travelled twenty miles or more along the banks of the Tweed, a fine, clear, rapid stream for many miles, nearly as broad as the Thames is at Richmond. On each side of it are beautiful green slopes interspersed with villages, and here and there the ruins of some old castle, behind which appear bold swelling mountains.

'For some miles from Coldstream, the meadows, though rich, are too level to be striking. But afterwards the views grow extremely romantic. The town of Kelso has a very fine effect when seen from many parts of the river. From the centre of it rises the ruins of a venerable abbey, strikingly contrasted with several modern edifices that stand near it on the Tweed, which near this spot receives into it the Teviot, no mean river. A well-built bridge, a neat English chapel, and a house lately built by a Mr. Dixon, principally catch the eye. As soon as we leave Kelso, we come in view of the extensive plantations of the Duke of Roxburgh, which enclose his palace at Floors, a very large house that, from its situation on an eminence overhung with woods, excites an idea of grandeur, though the building in itself has nothing very striking, either for the design or execution. However, the scene is rendered extremely pleasing by the site of the ancient Castle of Roxburgh, the very ruins of which are perished and gone; but the romantic mount upon which it stood, with the old entrenchments, still captivate attention, presenting on its summit no longer hostile towers, but fine thriving plantations of young trees. This old castle has been rendered remarkable in history by the death of James II., King of Scotland, who was killed by the bursting of a

cannon as he was endeavouring to retake it from the English. They still show the spot where he fell, and where his son was crowned immediately on the field.

'Hence to Melrose the passage is extremely fine, the Tweed being overhung one while with steep craggy rocks, at other times with fine swelling hills, here and there covered with woods and rendered very picturesque by some Laird's house emerging from the midst of them. At length we forsake the river for a time, and do not regain it till we descend all at once into the deep sequestered valley in which the ruins of this fine old abbey stand. They are far superior to the common run of old Gothic buildings, and highly repay the trouble of going to see them.'

Dr. Percy was expected to take a prominent part in all the entertainments at Alnwick Castle. Among the more 'extraordinary visitants' he describes the Duke of Cumberland, brother of George III., in the following manner:

'He is neither so bad in point of understanding nor morals, as the papers represent him. He is a good-humoured indiscreet young man, with a strong appetite for pleasure, which has made him fall a victim to temptations which were purposely thrown in his way, but he now sees the ill-consequences, and I trust will hereafter be more upon his guard.

'On Sunday last I had the honour to preach before H.R.H. at Alnwick Church, where he behaved remarkably attentive. I adapted my discourse to the peculiarities of his situation; and hinted as gently as I could, the necessity persons of the first rank were under of being circumspect in their conduct; for that every eye is upon them, and the world is ever disposed to aggravate their failings. He took this hint in good

part; he invited me to call on him often in London, and spoke of me to others in a very obliging manner. On Sunday after church he held a great Levée at the Castle. The two corporations of Newcastle upon Tyne and Berwick upon Tweed attended and were presented to H.R.H. as well as Sir Walter Blackett, Bart., and Matthew Ridley, Esq., Members for Newcastle, Sir John Hussey Delaval, Bart., Member for Berwick: and the High Sheriff of the County, Charles Bigge, Esq. Alnwick Castle appeared in all its glory. Both those corporations are 30 miles distant, and are very tenacious of their privileges, so that it was a great proof of their respect to come so far out of their own boundaries: and it resembled the attendance paid by the vassals of the old earls of Northumberland in ancient times. All this company were entertained by the Duke and Duchess at a very grand dinner consisting of 177 dishes. They were arranged at three tables, at one of which H.R.H. sat with the Duke and Duchess, Lord Percy, and the first-rate company. Lord Algernon entertained the Corporation of Berwick at another table, and I had the care of a third table, at which sate the Aldermen of Newcastle. We had among other things a very fine turtle to which the two Corporations did ample justice. After the Duke's table and mine was broke up, the Prince laid hold of me, and would make me go with him to the room where Lord Algernon was plying the Aldermen of Berwick with bumpers of claret, and there H.R.H. sate down with great good humour and began a round of Corporation Toasts, which tho' highly flattering to the Berwick gentlemen, were alarming to so puny a drinker as myself; which he perceiving, very kindly gave me leave to withdraw and made the Rector of

the Parish supply my place: and as for the Body Corporate they all had their full doses.'

In the matter of toasts Dr. Percy adopted the expedient of the clerics at the close of the twelfth century, who, when the bishops objected to their fighting duels, kept champions and fought by proxy. Sir William Temple had always two or three gentlemen with him on his travels in the Netherlands, and when a bumper was necessary he put it upon them. Dr. Percy not only did his drinking by deputy, but showed great moderation in the matter of eating. He held that nothing conduces more to longevity than abstinence with labour. After man had fallen from his original state, in order to prevent the excessive growth of wickedness, meat and strong liquor were designed to shorten the antediluvian length of life. His views on this subject, like his theories on the origin of the ancient ballad poetry, are here recorded, though they may not coincide with those generally accepted. In any case he attained to the hale and hearty old age, sound in mind and body, for which most of the other members of the *Bas Bleu* Society with their plain living and high thinking were remarkable; Mrs. Montagu and Mrs. Thrale, the rival queens, were octogenarians, while Sir William Pepys felt increasingly vigorous up to the time of his death at the age of 86. Mrs. Garrick nimbly climbed a ladder shortly before she died, within a year of completing her century, Hannah More lived to be 88, and Elizabeth Carter 86.

In order to show how Dr. Percy escaped the evil effects of dinners consisting of 177 dishes, it is necessary to enter into rather homely details, for in the matter of health we are most of us inclined, after the manner of the great Syrian captain, to despise the simple regula-

tions, though when we suffer the penalty of our neglect we are all eager 'to do some great thing' to repair the mischief. To commence with a golden rule,[1] Dr. Percy declares that, with regard to the right quantity of food, nature requires no mathematical exactness, but the sensible and healthy plan is for each individual to find out 'how much *fits*, so as to be lightsome under it, and not indisposed to exercise.' Water he believes to be the most wholesome of all drinks, and two pints a day 'drunk warm and rather after than at the time of eating,' he prescribes as the right quantity, a matter in which teetotalers frequently exceed. Spirituous liquors he declares to be certain though slow poison, even when diluted with water, for 'by their corroding acid they produce depression and other pernicious effects.' Smoking or chewing tobacco without drinking he admits may be useful to those of phlegmatic constitution, but snuff he condemns as 'just good for nothing at all.' Those of studious disposition should read and write standing in an erect position, and carry on their studies, when possible, walking. All the organs and muscles of the body must be strengthened by exercise, the feeble arms by shuttlecock, the weak legs by football, and the weak backs by ringing and pumping, while the gouty should walk on rough roads. Exercise is best combined with open air, and taken two or three times a day, before meals, and before going to bed. A cold bath is recommended, supplemented by the vigorous use of a flesh brush, which method of grooming is as beneficial to mankind as to horses. Those suffering from weak nerves should pour cold water on their heads. In the matter of what we should now describe as nerves and

[1] From manuscript at Alnwick, access to which has been kindly granted by the Duke of Northumberland.

temper, he warns all those of 'lively imagination and great vivacity' against 'violent passions that cause acute diseases and sudden death'; while those of thoughtful disposition and good understanding should beware of 'slow lasting passions that bring on chronical diseases.' For the comfort of the less gifted he notes that from both of these infirmities 'the indolent and thoughtless suffer least, and the idiots not at all.'

He sums up his rules as follows:

'The calming of the passions is the work of religion. The love of God is the sovereign remedy for all miseries. It effectually prevents all the bodily disorders that the passions introduce; it keeps them within bounds and by the unspeakable joy and calm serenity it gives to the mind it becomes the most powerful of all means of health and long life.'

Dr. Percy's practice, if it equalled his preaching, must have shown a fine example of the simple life, yet his advice was nevertheless sought by the compiler of a cookery-book who, before putting his work in the press, requested the assistance 'of his scientific friends in order that it might be served up accordingly, on trenchers, in pewter or in silver vessels.' The author gave permission to Dr. Percy to keep the manuscript a few days, in case his 'ideas on this important subject were not ready.' The following letter appears to answer such inquiries, and shows that though he agreed with Goldsmith's dictum that

Man wants but little here below,

he liked that little good.

'An opinion sometimes prevails among literary gentlemen, who live recluse, that it is usual with persons who keep or frequent expensive tables, to talk

much on the subject of cookery. I lived myself upwards of six months every year for fifteen years or more with the late Duke of Northumberland, who kept one of the first tables in Europe, and I have been a guest at the best tables in England and Ireland, and yet I never heard the subject of cookery furnish two minutes' conversation at any one of them in my whole life.

'On the subject of good eating the cognoscenti have generally their jaws too well employ'd to be at leisure to prater much, but when the dishes are removed a new subject offers—the wine—on which subject gentlemen are diffuse enough. The superior flavour of this or that vintage; the failure of this or that year's growth; the history of some peculiar pipe, the difficulties of getting it over, the many risques it ran of being spoiled, afford interesting topics and fill up the vacuities of better conversation. Men eat and are silent, men drink and are loquacious. This is the true state of the matter.

'But I fear you will be scandalized at what I am now going to utter, viz.: "That genuine French cookery is the most wholesome of all elaborate cookery." Sir John Elliot, one of the best physicians of this age, asserts that the French have reduced the culinary art to a science, that has render'd most of their sauces antidotes against indigestion, and that when a well-educated French cook exercises his art to perfection he renders the dishes more salutary than they would be without them. So much for *genuine* French cookery, but bad Irish or English imitations of it I believe to be deserving of the worst epithets you have utter'd—to be nasty abominable poisonous adulterations of God's good creatures. You will perhaps hence infer that I am an epicure and keep a French cook myself. I do *not*. My principal food is the most simple in the world,

being chiefly a plain boiled bread pudding, such as is usually recommended for children, a very little animal food with a great accompanyment of vegetables at dinner—I never eat supper—so that I have no experience of the effect of French cookery myself. But I am inclined to believe Sir John Elliot may be right from what I have seen in another.' That other was the Duke of Northumberland, who suffered the greater part of his life from a 'chronical complaint,' and without the greatest care he would not probably have reached the age of fifty. But he had 'a very excellent operator in cookery from France, of whose preparations he was very fond, without indulging to excess,' and owing perhaps to this 'successful management,' in spite of his peculiarities of constitution, he lived to the good age of seventy-six.

But to return to the Royal visit to Alnwick, and the overwhelming amount of eating and drinking that has caused this digression.

'On Tuesday,' Dr. Percy continues, 'we all went to a great entertainment provided by the Corporation of Berwick, which was to be concluded in the evening by a grand ball and supper given in honour of H.R.H. by the Duke of Northumberland. We set out from Alnwick Castle in great form, making a procession of coaches, post-chaises, &c., with a large cavalcade of servants on horseback. H.R.H. rode first in a phaeton (his favourite vehicle) along with Sir John Hussey Delaval, then the Duke and Colonel Deaken (the Prince's Groom of the Bed Chamber) in a post-chaise and four; Lord Percy and Mrs. Grey in another. I went with Lady Delaval and her son in their coach and six, which, as it made the largest figure, all the country people crowded to our coach window, not taking

any notice of the Duke of Cumberland, who rode before; which occasioned them no small disappointment. We found that the lower sort of people thought it was the same Duke of Cumberland who had beat the Rebels in 1745. People of a somewhat higher rank, who had seen the London Newspapers, expected to see a lame deformed creature, with half his face eat away with the evil, and were much surprised to see such a fine blominge young fellow, and still more to see him dance in the evening, for he is one of the best dancers I ever saw, and warmed with the exercise and glowing with pleasure, he looked remarkably handsome.

'At Berwick we had a very grand dinner given us by the Corporation, who have a very large revenue. The Duke of Cumberland behaved very properly and they were all much pleased with him; for to do him justice, he has not the least pride. But he loves waggery; for I sate about the middle of the table at which he presided, and near me was a monstrous high pyramid of jellies, that tottered exceedingly as the table moved, which H.R.H. observing, he tried all he could, without being perceived, to shake the table and bring it down upon our heads, at the same time winking to me to take care of myself. Luckily he was too far off, or we should have had a woful crash and many a pompous Periwig would have been all bejellied. H.R.H. opened the Ball with the Countess of Home, and afterwards danced with a young Scottish girl, daughter of a small squire near Berwick; tho' he only preferred her because she was fine and showy. The humours of the father and mother, who were continually hovering over H.R.H., were very diverting, for seeing the familiar manner in which he talked to them, they were quite *hail fellow well met* with him, and clung to him

like burrs, which he with great humour encouraged. A most noble collation was provided for the company by our good Duke of Northumberland consisting of 240 Dishes. The Ball continued late, but notwithstanding, H.R.H. and all of us were up early the next morning to see a grand Review of the Troops there, after which we returned to Alnwick Castle.

'The dinner and ball at Newcastle also went off with great good humour, and the Prince made himself extremely acceptable to everybody. The Company were distributed into different rooms, and he went by turns and sate with each of them, which pleased them much. The first table, at which he dined himself, was filled with nobility and gentry of the first fashion, and was served with a dinner scarce inferior to any I ever saw at the Duke of Northumberland's Table. The Ball, which began about seven, was very brilliant, and was opened by the Duke of Cumberland and Mrs. Mayoress. Many minuets were danced, and Lord Percy and Lord Algernon distinguished themselves. A great number of very genteel well-dressed people assembled from all parts of this great County ; the room was monstrously crowded, so I early left it, along with the Duchess, Mrs. Grey and Lord Algernon. H.R.H. endeavoured to please everybody, by taking different partners among the prettiest young ladies he could find. The next morning, as we were at breakfast, the Duke of Cumberland came to us to our Inn, and to oblige the people, who were assembled in a great crowd in the street, he sat an hour at the window, with the sash up, conversing with us with great good humour.

'The Duke and Lord Algernon went, with much other company, to dine along with H.R.H. at Seaton Delaval, the seat of Sir John Delaval : where he was to

continue till Sunday evening, and then he proposed to set out back for London.'

It has been objected by a critic in a leading paper of one of our manufacturing towns that the letters of the *Bas Bleu* show them to have been 'eminently middle-class.' Writers like the good Duchess of Somerset apparently lost much of their social prestige by permitting themselves to take life seriously. But if such objectors will follow us into the circles in which we are now moving, they will witness the pastimes of Dukes, Royal and otherwise, without fear of their susceptibilities being offended by any abnormal amount of brains or common sense. The eighteenth-century newspapers also shared this preference for fashionable society. Horace Walpole tells that while Gray's death in 1771 was dismissed with one single paragraph, that of Sir Francis Delaval filled whole columns every day. The Delavals were noted for their extravagance and eccentricity: 'Don't you know' wrote Walpole 'that next to Mr. Pitt and Mr. Delaval, Prince Ferdinand is the most fashionable man in England?' We are told by Sir George Douglas in his 'Diversions of a Country Gentleman' of a picture representing a Delaval 'in the act of leaping his hunter over the dining-table, upon the further side of which a roaring fire burns in the grate ready to receive him, should he pitch from the saddle,' which feat was undertaken for a bet of 100 guineas. We may therefore rest assured that we are now associating with what Dr. Percy called 'people of the first distinction,' or what in these days is vulgarly known as 'the smart set.' The Delaval family hired Drury Lane Theatre, and 'acted so well' that Horace Walpole said 'it was astonishing that they should not have sense enough not to act at all.' So great was the rage

to see this performance that the House of Commons adjourned at three o'clock on purpose, and the gallery generally occupied by the footmen appeared strung with 'blue ribands.' In this pastime they were assisted by the Duke of York (brother to George III.), of whose speeches in the House of Lords it was said 'that any administration that could stand till routed by his eloquence would be immortal.' This company of amateurs had a pretty little theatre (known as the Duke of York's) in Westminster, but none of the Royal Family were to be ever found among the audience. Lord Grenville spoke his mind plainly on the subject and said to the Prince, 'Sir, your Royal Highness is in the wrong to act thus, the English are a grave nation.' Horace Walpole had never been at this play, he would not ask for a ticket as he heard that some people had been refused, and 'he did not choose to have such a silly matter taken ill.'

Writing to his wife from Northumberland House on June 20, 1767, Dr. Percy says:

'Where do you think I have been this evening? To see the Duke of York act a play. This is a distinction that very few of the first nobility themselves have obtained: for but 50 persons are admitted at a time, and they act but seldom. It is to Lady Delaval that I am indebted for this great honour. She is Sir Francis Delaval's Brother's wife.

'Nothing could be conducted in a more genteel manner. The company were shown into a very neat Drawing Room, where they sat drinking tea and coffee till the play was ready to begin. Then they were shown into the Theatre, which is small, the 3 seats for spectators will just hold 50 persons, and were covered with fine cloth. The stage was raised about 2 feet, and decorated in a very pretty neat manner,

as in the great Theatres, but was much more genteel, and exceedingly well lighted; the music was concealed behind the scenes, and consisted of a very well chosen band.

'The play they acted was "Jane Shore," written by Nicholas Rowe. I believe you will find it in my Study, upon one of the top shelves, tied up among a large bundle of small Plays, all writ on the backs. I would have you look for it, that you may understand the several parts as I describe them.

'The part of Jane Shore was performed exceeding well (particularly the dying scene) by the Countess of Mexborough, Sister to Sir Francis Delaval. She is a very well shaped woman, of the middle size, about five and thirty; not handsome, yet agreeable enough, and looked the character tolerably well. Her action was graceful, yet modest. Her elocution very tolerable, and she was upon the whole a just and affecting actress.

'The part of Alicia (the false friend of Jane Shore) was performed in a manner superior to anything I ever saw, by Lady Stanhope, another sister of Sir Francis Delaval's (Wife of Sir William Stanhope, brother to Lord Chesterfield). She is much taller than her sister, about the same age, and tho' not beautiful, yet a fine graceful genteel woman; with the most charming mellow voice that ever was, and not a syllable fell from her, but what was quite distinct and fitted the ear. Her part is a very difficult one, yet she did it to admiration: particularly in that affecting scene where she takes leave of Hastings at the end of the 4th Act; and in the last act where she appears distracted; there was not an eye in the house that could withhold its tears. All agree that she is equal to any actress, yet amid all her action, you saw the delicacy of a modest

well-bred woman, very different from the hirelings of the stage. Now for the men.

'The part of King Richard III. was performed by Sir Francis Delaval, Knight of the Bath. You know what a monstrous big man he is: and King Richard is usually represented as crooked and deformed. Sir Francis therefore rather appeared too tall and lusty for the character. However he made a fine grim tyrant, and his dress was very well chosen, but he did not act up to either of his sisters. His voice was not so clear as theirs, nor so well heard.

'The part of Lord Hastings, lover to Jane Shore, was performed by His Royal Highness the Duke of York, who appeared to great advantage in point of figure, being very becomingly dressed, and you know he is rather handsome. The most ungraceful part of him is his legs and knees, which bend in: However he was upon the whole a pleasing figure and tolerable good actor. His action was exceedingly proper and becoming; and he seemed to enter into his part with taste and spirit. His attitudes and postures were exceedingly fine, but his voice was not quite equal. He speaks very thick and often sunk his words so that he could not be distinctly heard.

'The part of the Husband of Jane Shore was acted by Captain Wrottesley, a young gentleman of the Duke of York's household. His voice is melodious, and his whole part was most excellently performed; one of the young gentlemen of the Delaval Family, however, did his part very ill; he was commonly out, and seldom could speak a word without being prompted aloud.

'There was so much decency and good breeding among the spectators, consisting all of persons of the

first quality (except your Humble Servant) who kept such attentive silence, and behaved with so much decorum, that the performance presented a very great contrast to the brawling noise and disturbance of the common theatre.

'Between the acts were fine solemn pieces of music, well adapted to the pathetic scenes of the Tragedy.

'When the play was over, the company was shown back again into the Drawing Room, where they were entertained with sweetmeats, liqueurs &c. And all the actors and actresses came and paid their compliments to the company and then sat down and chatted with them. There were card tables ready, and several formed themselves into parties. The whole concluded like any other genteel assembly.

'The Play-house, which is a neat box hired, and fitted up, on purpose for these occasions, is on the back part of St. James's Park, not far from the Queen's Palace. So that it was very commodious coming home. Nothing was wanting but to have you with me, as I enjoy no pleasure without you.'

The Delavals had not observed the maxim that King Henry VI. always impressed on the Eton boys, 'to serve God, attend to their lessons, and avoid the Court.' Thus playing with Hanoverian Princes proved as fatal to them as fighting for the Stuart cause had done to many another good old family. In the above-mentioned book, from which permission has kindly been given to quote, Seaton Delaval is described as a 'ruined palace in the pit country,' that speaks of 'the humbled pride of life,' while 'the small Norman chapel with its old armour, banners, and recumbent effigies' tell us of a 'long descent and glory passed away.'

'A more effective drama in stones and mortar,' Sir George Douglas declares, 'cannot be imagined than this mansion, which is perhaps Vanbrugh's masterpiece.' 'On the one hand the bravado, the insolence of ostentation of that teeming and triumphant mind which wrote "The Relapse," created Amanda, designed Blenheim Palace, and Castle Howard. And, on the other, the insidious irony of decay, in association with a negligence so contemptuous that, since the occurrence of a great fire, it has never stooped to so much as protect an unglazed window with a board.'

We read that from a stately flight of steps rises a portico borne by lofty columns forming the entrance to the great hall, which is carried up the whole height of the building, and is adorned with statues now dilapidated and defaced. But the imposing grandeur of the Renaissance style appears more truly classic, because simpler, in the great kitchen with its balcony railed with wrought iron, from which Lady Delaval directed her household after the manner described by Sir Walter Scott in 'Peveril of the Peak.' Now, alas! the White Lady of Seaton Delaval stands at her post by a window, 'a pallid, nunlike phantom, whose eyes are never dried for weeping over all that has been, for ever mournfully expectant, watching for the day which shall set all things right.' Of course those who would explain away everything are ready to declare that 'her airy body has no more real existence than is formed by the cross lights of confronting windows.'

In letters addressed to his wife, Dr. Percy describes his various tours in the Border country. He was first employed to travel with his pupil, Lord Algernon Percy, who was a delicate boy and, according to Walpole, 'had been very near taking a much longer journey.'

They were 'genteelly entertained by Sir James Lowther at Lowther Hall, one of the greatest estates in England,' and proceeded by easy stages to Keswick with its great lake four or five miles long, situated in a fine valley, surrounded by mountains. From the highest, Skiddaw, they surveyed vast tracts of country in England and Scotland, and could also see the Irish Channel and the Isle of Man.

They continued their journey to Drumlanrig by way of Dumfries, and during the perfect summer weather, rode for eighteen miles along the banks of the river Nith, enjoying the beautiful scenery.

From the Duke of Queensberry's palace at Drumlanrig, which Percy declared was only 'in a kind of middle style between the old castles of the ancient Barons, and the modern houses of the present nobility,' they continued their journey to the Duke's unfinished castle at Douglas. The wild and irregular cliffs overhung with shaggy woods, through which the Clyde foamed down in a succession of falls, formed a 'most stupendous scene.' Percy was forced to admit that '*even in England* this delightful country might pass as beautiful.'

Between Glasgow and Edinburgh Dr. Percy showed his pupil the remains of the Roman wall which ran between the Firths of Clyde and Forth, and formed the northern boundary of the Roman Empire in Britain. They explored Stirling Castle, the ancient palace of the Scottish Kings, with its ornamental pillars and fine ceilings of carved wood. From the castle walls they surveyed the valley through which winds in the most serpentine curves the river Forth, and the town of Alloa, only four miles distant by land and twenty-four by water. They talked no doubt of the deeds of chivalry that these walls had

witnessed, of which the famous fifteenth century fight *à outrance* between James Douglas[1] and the *preux chevalier*, Jacques de Lalaing, is the one most circumstantially recorded by contemporary writers. The Burgundian champion braved the perils of the sea, which he feared more than the sword of the adversary, in order to try conclusions with this most renowned Scottish knight. They fought in the Royal presence and in that of Earl Douglas, who was supported by four or five thousand of his retainers. The proceedings terminated with three days of uninterrupted feasting, but even that did not kill the valiant foreign knight, for he lived long enough to have his head blown off by one of the first cannon-balls. The old Palace of Linlithgow, with its green lawns and fine pieces of water, and Lord Hopetoun's house were also visited by Dr. Percy and his pupil. After a ride of three hundred miles they reached Edinburgh, and were shown the curiosities of the place by Dr. Blair.

Other tours were made by Dr. Percy during the yearly Audit week, when Alnwick Castle was crowded with tenants, and the Duke and Duchess with their family and followers generally dispersed in various directions 'in order that they might give no interruption to their auditors.' The following extracts describe his impressions of the Western Highlands in 1773:

'At Dumbarton we saw a Highland Fair, chiefly for the little kylies, or Highland cows, very prettily shaped, but not much bigger than mastiff dogs; the fair is held in a haugh or small plain near the river, with tents and booths; about a mile north of Dumbarton, the Highlanders regaling themselves with whisky and punch. We saw a Highland ball in a loft over a grenary near

[1] See *County Histories of Scotland*. Vol. by Sir George Douglas.

the fair ; most of the girls without shoes and stockings, but they danced with great spirit and in exceeding good time, though the fiddler often changed the tune in the midst of the dance. The landlord at Dumbarton accompanied me to the fair in his plaid waistcoat only, and blue bonnet ; but when he came to give in his bill, we saw a grand coat of arms, with supporters, and were told by some Highland gentry that he was of the great family of the MacFarlanes, nearly allied to the Chief of that Clan, who inhabitated the west banks of Loch Lomond, and that his Mother was of *the auld family* ; she was a Stewart, and all of that name esteem themselves allied to the Royal House.

'Loch Lomond, with its charming Islands, and the bold rocks which rise up out of its bosom, its varied margins broken and fringed with woods, its beautiful promontories that stretch their heads into the lake, sometimes bold and rocky, at others soft and level, with sweet meads and lovely bosquets of wood : the great Ben Lomond, and other stupendous mountains to the north form a succession of pictures fine beyond all description. The Lake is twenty-four miles long. The immense mountain of Ben Lomond, whose foot forms ten miles of the opposite shore, is nowhere a flat or tiresome object, for its top and sides are broken all the way down with rugged projections, and its feet are finely fringed with wood.

'We proceeded to Tarbet, where, to our great mortification, we found the single Inn, which has but four beds for company, already occupied by Mr. Hatsel, Clerk of the House of Commons, and a party with him : which forced us to proceed through the mountains to Carn-dow, fourteen miles ; however we had daylight enough to see the salt water lake, which runs out of the

sea, called Loch Long. After riding about three miles round the head of this Lake we turned off westward into the mountains and were soon overtaken by night. The road being very rocky, and full of great ascents and descents, and our horses tired, having come from Glasgow near forty miles, we proceeded slowly thro' the mountains, along a wild vale called Glen-Crow, being often obliged to alight and grope our way after the post-coach, down the steeps; so that it was 12 o'clock before we reached the little Highland Inn at Carn-dow, on the banks of another salt water Lake called Loch-Fyne.

'Being obliged to raise the people out of their beds, they stared at us with affright to see company at that late hour. At first they told us the house was full, but at length we gained admittance, and in order to procure us a room to sup in an old man and woman were raised out of bed in what was called the best chamber, and we were supping very heartily on excellent fish, rashers of bacon and potatoes, when we were surprised with the noise of a person snoring; we looked round with astonishment; at length I traced the noise to what we had taken for a clothes press, but upon my unbuttoning the door, lo! a bed appeared and the naked hairy arm of a Highlander, who lay there snoring and sleeping beside us. A private room was procured for Mr. and Mrs. Durant and our supper-room assigned to myself: where in very sweet, clean sheets I slept soundly. But poor Mrs. B., who could not think of passing the night in this, called the best chamber, with a Highlander, tho' buttoned up in a press, was carried to a much worse room below stairs: and shown such another press, and while she was preparing to lie down in her clothes, was alarmed with a second snoring in her chamber, and inquiring whence it proceeded was

answered by the Highland hostess, who could hardly speak any language but Erse, that it was only "her Papa and Mamma." Upon which, supposing she might safely venture herself along with two decrepit old people, she lay down with great composure. But in the morning she heard one of the bare-footed damsels of the house come and open two or three presses and whisper to the persons within to make no noise, for "Missy lay there;" and presently she saw come forth, buttoning up their clothes, three soldiers and two Highlanders, who she found had slept all night in the same chamber.

'We proceeded next morning round the head of Loch Fyne to Inverary, which appears extremely fine as seen across the Bay, but the building is by no means in a good taste, tho' built in the Castle style. It stands in the centre of so fine an assemblage of mountains and woods that it affords upon the whole a very noble picture.

'The Duke of Argyll's Castle is exceedingly inferior to Alnwick; however, to find even such a palace in so remote and wild a situation, 503 miles from London, is striking, for in this country all the arts of life are so remote from the perfection they have attained in the South, that the common people live in low huts, piled up of rude stones and covered with turf, most commonly without either chimney or window.

'When we returned to Carn-dow I had a mind to peep into the Highland kirk, which stood at a small distance on the margin of the sea; upon opening the door and thrusting my head into this small tabernacle, which is fitted up like most of the Scotch Presbyterian temples with a pulpit only, without any desk, I saw at the upper end an elderly man in a blue bonnet with spectacles on his nose darning stockings, and at the same time hearing some children read, while other

little fry were scattered thro' the pews learning their lessons: boys and girls promiscuously and hardly to be distinguished; for the latter had no caps and the former no breeches, but in their stead the Highland philibegs, which is a kind of short petticoat worn by all the men in this country, which does not come quite so low as their naked knees, and the petticoats of the girls does not reach above an inch or two lower: both sexes were bare-footed and bare-legged. This was the schoolmaster of the parish; the native language of this country is the Erse, but the children are taught English. In order to show off before me this Highland pedagogue ordered out two of his uppermost boys, and put into their hands a book carefully wrapped in blue paper. The boys began to read, but with such a strange, yelping tone, of such a guttural roughness, that after listening five minutes I could not discover a syllable of any language I had ever learned, so I concluded they were reading Erse, but happening to glance my eye upon the book, guess my astonishment, when I found it was Dryden's "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day." Not one word, I am persuaded, did these poor children, or their stocking-darning master, understand; but I was extremely diverted at the look of consequence which this illiterate pedagogue assumed, and the directions he affected to give. I found the children paid one shilling a quarter each for their learning, over and above the little salary which the master receives from the Kirk of Scotland. We travelled back to Tarbet, winding along the edge of steep precipices. Amid these mountains is the valley called Glen-Crow, through which we ascended a great height, yet we found still higher mountains hanging over our heads, and in this elevation a narrow lake ran for two miles beside the road; beyond rose a

huge rocky mountain of great height, having its summit engulfed in a cloud, that spread along its brow like a curtain. Here we saw a couple of eagles on the wing, soaring over our heads, and every now and then alighting on a huge craggy rock that projected out of the cloud, but at such a tremendous height that we should not have known they were birds of that size, if we had not compared them with the sheep that were grazing at nearly the same distance. From this summit is a most romantic view down another part of the vale, full of little Highland farms, where we saw a Highlander mowing his hay, with a scythe fixed to a long straight handle, like the shaft of a spear; he was in a plaid waistcoat and philibegs, without breeches, shoes, or stockings. Some little cocks of hay, which he had mown a few days before, were covered each with a little cap of rushes to serve as a penthouse from the rain, which began to pour down.'

The following year Dr. Percy determined to make a tour through the more mountainous parts of Northumberland and down along the western border of Scotland towards Carlisle. He wrote:

'I rode by the side of a pretty river called Readwater, which runs through the long narrow vale called Reads-dale, formerly inhabited by none but robbers and Moss-troopers, but now by some worthy Farmers, who chiefly make their rent by the large flocks which they feed upon the mountains. The Duke is making a Turnpike road that will cause it to be one of the great thoroughfares to Scotland. At present there is not so much as a Cartway thro' the whole valley, tho' it is twenty miles long; they carry their hay upon sledges without wheels. I crossed over the tops of some of the highest mountains in Northumberland; from the

summit of one of them I could see the west sea, and to the margin of the East Sea, though the Sea itself was hidden by some high ground that intercepted the view. The Duke is building my Lord Percy a very pretty house in the castle style for his shooting parties. It is situated in a vale in the centre of three vast mountains; two very pretty rivers meet and join their waters just before the House, which is surrounded with fine woods, and seated amidst great plenty of moor fowl both black game and red; they are both in shape not unlike a partridge, but the black cock is full as large as a pheasant, of a rich glossy black, with a few white feathers in the wing and tail. The red game is less than the black, but larger than a partridge, the plumage is remotely like that of a partridge, but much more chequered, like that of the woodcock. They are both kinds most delicious eating, and only found on the most unfrequented mountains. Thence I passed over a range of high land between two hills called the Reed Swires,[1] that used to form the boundary of the two kingdoms, and was formerly the scene of a battle, of which Allan Ramsay published a description in an old Scottish ballad. I entered Scotland at Jedburgh, with its fine old Abbey, and passed along the borders of the two kingdoms, but on the Scotch side, through the finest romantic valleys, between hills and mountains, by the side of fine rivers, charmingly fringed with woods. This beautiful country is well described in the ballad of "Chevy Chase," under the name of pleasant Tiviotdale. In the course of this day's expedition I saw the old penon or standard, thought to be Hotspur's.

'We lay in a most wretched hut among the moun-

[1] The English and Scottish Borderers fought their last battle at Reed Swires.

tains, which divide Tiviotdale and Eskdale. The Tiviot runs towards the east and falling into the Tweed is received into the German Ocean. The Esk runs westward, and is discharged into the Irish Sea. The place is called Moss-paul, and is so solitary that the people never think of shutting their doors to keep out thieves. The next day we travelled thro' a series of green narrow vales to a town in a most delightful woody vale called Langholme, from thence we rode many miles along the side of the River Esk, amidst the most charming woods, till we came to Solway Moss.'

Dr. Percy's attention was drawn to the great superstition of the northern Borderers in the cure of diseases. Persons having the gift of second sight united the professions of physic and divining, and were as much esteemed as the minstrels had been. At Coldstream there lived a man whom people travelled sixty miles to consult. An old Scotch shepherd on one of the Duke's farms gave hints that he was 'gifted'; his fame soon spread all over the country, and incredible numbers of people resorted to him for advice, among whom he appears to have worked some wonderful cures.

We hear very little of Dr. Percy's ministrations as a chaplain, but on the blank page of a sermon, preached by him at Alnwick, a list of receipts and disbursements are recorded. Possibly the manuscript was perused by some young lady whose attention it failed to arrest, and her mind wandered to financial embarrassments with which her mental arithmetic was unable to cope, so she made the following notes:

Received of my Father .	£5.	Mohaire for gown .	£5	15 0
of my Lord at New Year's tide 2 pieces.		for a fan . .		10 0
		lost at cards . .		2 0
		for going to the play		5 0
		for various sums .		5 6

Dr. Percy always referred to the years he had spent at Alnwick with pleasure and satisfaction. No doubt he found the Northumberland landowners resembled their neighbours on the other side of the Border, who were said to possess 'courage, temperance, prudence and economy.' 'There is not in the North,' we are told by a contemporary writer, 'such a character as that of the English country squire, whose whole life is spent in hunting, drinking, swearing and sleeping.' Goldsmith also considered the Scotch landlords better bred than the Irish, for some of the squireens in his own country with £1000 a year spent their whole lives in running after a hare, and drinking to be drunk. 'If such a being,' he declared, 'equipped in his hunting dress, came amongst a circle of Scotch gentlemen, they would behold him with the same astonishment that a countryman does King George on horseback.'

CHAPTER VII

1768–1776

Though Dr. Percy accepted his settlement at Alnwick as 'an unexpected favour from Heaven,' yet the necessary separation from his wife and children caused him to 'innocently make use of such human means as prudence suggested for the establishment of himself and his family in a more independent position.'

Of the several preferments to which through the Duke's interest he aspired, there was none that appeared so agreeable to him as a prebend in the city of his ancestors. Therefore he begged his cousin, William Cleveland, to send him an early account of all the Prebendaries of Worcester Cathedral, with their several ages, degrees of health, and chances of a vacant stall. Though this hope of gaining personal advantage through the death of a fellow-creature would appear repulsive to a kindly savage, Dr. Percy expressed no misgiving beyond the fear that his inquiries might prove fruitless. He left, as he said, 'the event to Divine Providence.' But Providence was happily also watching over the poor old Prebendaries. When one of their number 'dropt,' though Percy found that he was not destined to succeed him, far from being discouraged by hope deferred, he begged to receive early notice of any 'ensuing or expected vacancies.' When the next occurred, it came, as such long-coveted chances often do, too late, and he wrote to his cousin[1]:

[1] From MS. in the British Museum, where researches were made, as well as at the Bodleian, by the late Mr. George Taylor-Whitehead, of Compton Castle, Somerset.

'The intelligence you were so good as to impart will, I fear, be of no use to me. My noble friends at this time are quite unconnected with the people in power, and I must wait for a more favourable juncture. To you that are happily remote from the scene of action this ebb and flow in the tide of power must appear as unaccountable as that of the Mediterranean did to the first Phenician sailor who ventured out on its waters; but to me it is so familiar as to excite no more surprise than that sea does to a British Tar. If I am but landed safe in the desired port at last, I can weather out every intermediate contrary wind with great composure.'

In return for his information about the vacant stalls at Worcester, William Cleveland begged Dr. Percy to procure for him a private chaplaincy, or 'scarf' as it was then called—for each chaplain wore the scarf of his patron. Percy replied that unfortunately the Duke and Duchess's patronage was engaged, but he had other connections that he hoped might prove useful. On October 22, 1768, he wrote to his cousin from Northumberland House:

'I give you joy of your new scarf and wish it may be a prelude to higher honours. I got you this by the greatest chance in the world. Walking yesterday in the Park, I accidentally met with my Lord Home, whom I had the pleasure of seeing last summer at Alnwick; his Lordship renewed his acquaintance with me in so obliging a manner that it occurred to me to ask him the favour, which he immediately granted. In return I desire you will purchase a very fine silk scarf against next Sunday, and pray for his Lordship in the face of all your congregation. And with regard to my share in it, I will give you a full acquittance, if you will

take an opportunity of examining S. Martin's Register and will extract all the articles that relate to the Percys.'

Lord Home appears to have been one of those agreeable people who are always ready to promise everything to everybody without a moment's hesitation. It is not therefore surprising that there was some delay about the appointment. Percy wrote again to his cousin to ask if he would like 'a real actual chaplainship from another Scottish Peer, Lord Eglintoun, or if he would be content to wait till the death of Lord Sandys, and accept one promised in advance by his successor. If I apply for Lord Eglintoun's we must give up Mr. Sandys' reversion, but take your choice.' Lord Eglintoun's appointment was also delayed by his attending the trial of his brother's murderer at Edinburgh; but Percy, ever sanguine, drew the most favourable conclusions 'from his Lordship's silence.'

During this uncertainty William Cleveland not unreasonably desired to know whose chaplain he really was. Percy answered, 'You ask me whether in your bidding Prayer you should pray for both your patrons; I answer *No*. It will be sufficient if you name Lord Sandys. You are legally his chaplain only, and it will fully suffice if you remember good Lord Home in your private devotions.'

As the title of his legal patron was only prospective these instructions appear rather confusing.

Through the instrumentality of Dr. Percy, William Cleveland inherited in 1769, from a distant relative, Mrs. Price, the reversion of a property in the county of Cheshire, 'most delightfully situated directly opposite Liverpool on the banks of the Mersey, entitled Birkenhead, and valued at £1400 a year.'

'Look for it in a good map of Cheshire,' wrote

Dr. Percy to his cousin ; 'it is a good old mansion and annexed to it is a small ecclesiastical Patronage. Should it fall to you, you shall give it *my Harry* for a Title to go into Orders.'

Percy had himself received a legacy of £5000, as well as jewels, rings, snuff-boxes, gold watches, table linen, sheets, etc., which, however, were only to fall to him in the event of his surviving Mrs. Price's son and two grandsons.

'I give you joy,' wrote Dr. Percy to his cousin, 'for the obliging and proper manner in which Mrs. Price remembered us both in her last moments. As her Cheshire estates came by the *Clevelands*, it was right that she should place you first in the reversion. For what she assigns to me I am very thankful, but I am sure neither of us wish any failure of her children. However, the attention shown us does us honour. I contributed somewhat towards the reminding her of us both, by sending her a copy of the *Cleveland* pedigree, pointing out our mutual relation to her. For I had heard her express her ignorance how we were related to her family.'

Mrs. Price's son shortly afterwards caught the small-pox, and Percy tells us 'had like to have died' ; on his recovery he inoculated his two sons. Dr. Percy had also drawn up and presented to a distant kinsman a sketch of what he believed to be the connection between the two families of Walsh and Lowe, from whom the Percys and Clevelands were maternally descended, and 'verily hoped and believed it would lead to some advantage or other to his cousin.'

In his endeavours to secure a more independent position, Dr. Percy made inquiries concerning the post of Assistant Librarian to the British Museum, for

which he had some thought of applying. In 1769 he was appointed Chaplain to George III. A national reformation he hoped might be brought about by that excellent monarch, for he argued 'whether the great men about him are sincere or not, they will *appear* to copy the King's example, and that will have the same influence upon their inferiors, as if they were really virtuous.' Dr. Percy's waiting at St. James's, as well as his duties at Northumberland House, obliged him to pass eight months of every year in London, in addition to the months spent at Alnwick. His brother Anthony, whose misfortunes were a constant source of anxiety, notes with complacency that he was 'altogether with the Northumberland family,' but his wife, whom he was only occasionally able to visit, during the absence of the Duke and Duchess, no doubt regarded his promotion with less satisfaction. He mentions as an unusual event having 'stopped at Kew on his way to London, to spend a night and part of two days with Mrs. Percy.' Even the short time that he could be with his family in Northamptonshire was generally taken up with business, such as letting a new lease of his tithes at Wilbye, and 'bringing his parishioners to consent to an advance of rent.' So, amid the business, confinements, removals, and interruptions of his unsettled life, he could seldom find leisure to attend to his private affairs.

During these prolonged separations Percy acted on the principle of the Vicar of Wakefield, who wrote his wife's epitaph while still living, and hung over the chimney-piece this 'tribute to her prudence, economy, and obedience till death, in order to admonish her of her duty, inspire her with a passion for fame, and to remind her of her end.' In his absence Percy not

only assured his wife that her letters 'rejoiced his heart more than the greatest treasure,' but in his own, in which he addressed her as 'My dearest Life,' he told her how superior she was to the wives of other men. To avoid repetition, the following extract must serve as a specimen:

'If Mr. Hutchinson says handsome things of his wife, how much more reason have I, who am possessed of one as far superior to his, as the diamond is to the Bristol stone, and though I do not express my regard in poetry, I feel it in my heart, in honest prose, and esteem myself as the husband of the most beautiful and worthiest of women, the most excellent manager, the friend of the poor and of the whole human race.'

Notwithstanding this skilful treatment, after a time Mrs. Percy seems to have felt that she too would like a glimpse of the great world, and through the influence of the Duchess of Northumberland she was appointed in 1767 nurse to the Duke of Kent, the father of Queen Victoria. This attendance in the royal nursery, sometimes for twelve months at a time, can have hardly promoted the well-being of her own. She also found what consolation she could in little jaunts to Brighton, where, through the reflected honour of her husband's literary fame, she was admitted into Mrs. Thrale's circle. She was too much concerned with the impression that she was creating to be able to tell us anything of the conversation, which was probably adapted to the company. Mrs. Thrale does not appear to have wasted any of her wit on the worthy Mrs. Percy, and Fanny Burney occupied herself by sketching, in a few graphic words, her manners and conversation. Being herself one of the Queen's dressers, Miss Burney described Mrs. Percy as 'only a nurse in the Royal

family, of whom she delighted in talking.' Those acquainted with the Court of George III. can alone appreciate the relative importance of their positions in the household; but, like a good courtier, Fanny Burney probably knew how to hold her tongue, though happily for posterity she did not restrain her pen.

Mrs. Percy wrote to her husband from

'Brightelmston, ye 2 of September, 1769.

'My Dearest Life,—Wou'd you believe it but I do assure you Dr. Johnson comes to the Rooms every night. The Thrales have made him quite a new man, and he looks so smart that you would hardly know him, and is in charming health. I am generally of their party in the Rooms, so that I am thought a very learned Lady by the company, as I am always with them, or Mr. Lort the Greek Professor, who has the appearance of a very good-natured man. Mrs. Thrale never speaks to any other woman but myself—there's a compliment!—I think I have great reason to be very proud. She and myself are often set in a *tête-à-tête* together with all the eyes of the whole company upon us. I suppose they think we are discussing some learned point; but, were they to be within hearing, how much wou'd they be disappointed to find only the common chit-chat of other people. Pray have you seen the Comet? It has been seen here about a week, I own I have not, I am always in bed at the time, which is between twelve and one o'clock at night that it appears. Thank God the children are well. Adieu! God grant us a happy meeting, for I want to see you, it's a great while since I had that happiness; nine weeks this day. I hope you did not forget little Charlotte's birthday yesterday; I am glad to hear their

Graces are well; my most respectful compliments wait upon them.—I am,

'My dearest Love,

'Your ever Affecte.

'A. PERCY.'

Amid his other duties Dr. Percy tried, as far as possible, to superintend the education of his only son, Henry, whom he declared to be a fine, manly, sensible boy, good-natured and orderly, though he regretted that during the absence of his parents he had lost 'all the little civilities of his behaviour, and had become a mere unpolished schoolboy.'

In 1770 he sent him on a visit to his cousin, William Cleveland. Dr. Percy wrote:

'His mother's fears won't let him come by water, and to be at the expense of a post-chaise would be madness. He has a little horse, the gift of Lord Algernon Percy, and I have ordered a trusty man to lead him all the way to Worcester. I must bespeak your indulgence for the young rogue, who I hope hath recovered the good manners, otherwise he shall never go abroad again.'

Percy himself hoped to pass through Worcester about Wednesday in the Passion week, but could only stay two days, as he was due at Bridgnorth on Saturday, and on the following Monday he would set out from thence to be present on the Tuesday in Easter week at the coming of age festivities of Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, to which he had been invited.

But in the midst of all these projects it suddenly became evident that the Duke was going to have a severe fit of the gout, which not only made it difficult for Percy to obtain any more franks for his letters, but

totally disconcerted all his future plans. He, however, reached Worcester and remained there to assist his cousin with his Easter services. At the close of this year Dr. Percy was, for a short time, re-united to his family, but it was only in consequence of domestic affliction. He wrote from Easton Maudit to his cousin on November 22, 1770:

'Soon after I got down here, myself, my little boy, and my second girl, *Barbara*, were all seized with ulcerated throats, accompanied with a very high fever. I recovered, and little Bab also got thro' it happily. But Harry was pronounced to be at the point of death. By a happy Providence I happened to have a large quantity in the house of Dr. James's Fever Powder, and I gave him doses every six hours, till he had taken above ninety grains; from which moment he hourly mended. When his fever was expelled, we threw in bark which completed his cure.

'My wife sent away her two youngest children, to be out of the way of contagion. But her eldest, a very sensible girl of ten, was so useful to her that she could not spare her, and she hoped by taking proper precautions to preserve her from infection. The mother escaped: but the poor little girl at last fell. This sweet child was so engaging and pretty a companion to her mother in my absence and took so much trouble off her hands, by carrying messages to the servants and keeping her keys, that the loss of her has almost broke our hearts.

'We wish you and your spouse all possible pleasure at that great mart of it, *Bath*. Our minds are too much depressed to sympathise with you on the occasion of your party, otherwise we should have had great pleasure in hearing how you enjoyed it.'

Four months later on, March 25, 1771, Dr. Percy

wrote again from Northumberland House to his cousin:

'I was attending my waiting at St. James's in the Christmas, when I was fetched into the Country with the alarming account that my youngest daughter, *Charlotte*, was seized with the same dreadful disorder which had proved so fatal to her eldest sister, *Ann*. I hastened into the country, but it was only to be witness to her death. My little Flock is now reduced to three, viz., *Barbara*, *Henry*, and *Elizabeth*.'

Dr. Percy allowed that even in these afflictions 'there arose good out of evil,' for he was enabled to pass some months with his family, to keep little Harry 'constantly under his own eye, and to correct anything reprehensible in his conduct.' During this winter and spring he taught him the Latin rudiments and he read daily with his two elder children, Harry and Bab, Goldsmith's 'Roman History' and Stanyan's 'Grecian History,' making them find out the places mentioned in Wills's maps of Ancient Geography which were faced with modern maps on the same scale. Therefore history and geography became a mere matter of pleasure. The children amused themselves by turning over Kennett's 'Roman' and Potter's 'Grecian Antiquities,' where the customs of the country are exhibited in copper plates; consequently their favourite game soon became the acting of a Roman Triumph, Sacrifice and Funeral. To complete this method of instruction, if Dr. Percy could anywhere, within easy distance, discover real Roman remains he took his boy 'as a more than common indulgence' to them. The ruins of a Temple at Leicester were visited, together with several inscriptions, altars and other relics of the Roman conquests in Britain, which gave the child such an ardour for classical

literature that he wished to learn Latin in order to read about the people of whom his head was so full. In writing these details to his cousin Dr. Percy excuses himself by saying:

'You will smile at the foolish fondness of a Father in detaining you so long on so self-interested a subject. But why should not I relate the method I have taken to form an uncultivated human mind, with at least as much minuteness and self-applause, as a sportsman would have described the breaking of his favourite pointer: or a jockey the training of his horse for Newmarket.'

In 1772 another daughter was born, and Mrs. Percy complained that the attention required by her children, as well as her own very indifferent state of health and Dr. Percy's constant absence added very much to her 'cares and interruptions.' In the spring of 1774 Harry Percy announced the death of his baby sister in a letter written to his father's cousin, William Cleveland, during his summer holidays.

'Easton, August 30, 1774.

'Dear Sir,—My Papa is at present at Alnwick Castle, but we have the pleasure to hear that he is well: as are my Mamma and Sisters. But they met with a great affliction in the Spring, by the death of my very pretty little sister Hetty, who died of the Chin Cough, being not quite two years old, when she had just begun to prattle and be very engaging.'

The family were occasionally re-united under more cheerful circumstances. In writing to his cousin, Percy described a play, 'which has this Christmas been exhibited by my Lord Northampton's children at Ashby Castle along with the Percevals, children of his sister,

the Countess of Egmont. Harry, who is a great favourite with Lord Compton, had the honour to be associated into this little Company of Tragedians. Their play was the "Siege of Tamor," lately written by a Mr. Howard in Ireland, but its merit is not of the first rate.

Dramatis Personæ.

King of Meath	By Mr. Obeirne.
Niall, King of Ulster . .	By Mastr. Supple.
Donall, an Irish Chieftain	By Lord Compton.
Reli, Prince of Bressny .	By Henry Percy.
Archp. of Armagh . . .	By Honble. Mr. Perceval.
An Irish Bishop	By Honble. Spencer Perceval.[1]
1st Chieftain and also Carril, the Bard	By Henry Percy.
2nd Chieftain	By Honble. Spencer Perceval.
Princess of Meath . . .	By Lady Fanny Compton.
Her friend	By Lady Mary Perceval.
Female Attendant . . .	By Lady Eliz. Perceval.

'The whole formed a most agreeable little set, and the Tragedy was acted with great spirit.

'My Lord Northampton built up a most beautiful little Theatre in one of his large apartments, completely decorated with proper scenes, etc. Lord and Lady Northampton habited all the performers with rich dresses adapted to the characters. Harry's dress, in the character of Prince of Bressny, was a lemon colour silk waistcoat and breeches, trimmed with white fur, with a mantle of silk, spotted like a tiger-skin, with a fine gilt helmet (of Pasteboard) on his head. His chieftain's dress, a Scarlet waistcoat, Breeches and mantle, etc., prettily trimmed with white ribbands.

[1] Murdered during his tenure of office as Prime Minister, by Bellingham, in the lobby of the House of Commons on May 11, 1812.

'The Boy gained great applause, particularly in a soliloquy which he delivered with great emotion. Lord and Lady Sussex gave Harry a guinea the moment he came off the stage, and Lord Sussex made him a present of a silver-hilted sword which he had lent him for the occasion; at the same time Lady Sussex presented the boy with a pair of laced ruffles and silk stockens for the same purpose. Among such very young people (most of the performers being from twelve to fourteen, except Harry, who, tho' tall of his age will not reach eleven till next month) such exhibitions as these have a good effect, as they teach them a graceful carriage and a proper, pleasing manner of speaking; and when the play is well-chosen, it furnishes young minds with a treasure of noble moral sentiments expressed in poetical Language. After the play was over Lord Northampton treated the Company with an elegant supper and a Ball:—When a neighbouring Clergyman of good fortune and myself agreed to dance with each other's spouses, the consequence was that poor Mrs. Percy caught a terrible cold tho' she came home in Lord Sussex's coach. So that at the conclusion of all our pleasure we are ready to cry out with Solomon, *Omnia Vanitas*. Our daughter Barbara, tho' she did not act, spent the Christmas week along with Lady Fanny Compton, and tho' she danced at the Ball (thank God) escaped any cold.'

Harry's removal to Westminster School, which he entered as a King's Scholar, enabled Dr. Percy to keep the boy much under his own eye during the months he was in London, and he often spent the afternoon in his father's apartments at Northumberland House making Latin verses. At Westminster Dr. Percy recounts with pleasure that he conversed with none but gentlemen's

sons, many of them of 'the first distinction, and were he guilty of any little paltry vice he would be despised by his companions.'

During his holidays at Easton Maudit, Henry wrote to his father:

'Easton, August 24, 1775.

'Hond. Sir,—My Mama and Miss Duck [the Governess] dine at Lord Sussex's to-morrow, and me and my sisters on Saturday. I have read Plutarch's lives, down to Lysander and I think Cymon was one of the greatest generalls and Aristides the best man. Miss Duck desires her compliments, my sister joins in duty to you.

'I am, Hond. Sir,

'Your ever dutiful Son,

'Henry Percy.

'P.S.—Sir,—After I had writ this I received your kind letter and made shift to construe it by the help of a dictionary and shall ever obey its instructions.'

Dr. Percy was employed by the Duke to watch the debates in the House of Commons. The following will serve as a specimen of his reports; it refers to the debate on Wilkes' petition when he was brought before the House in custody. A vote of severe censure against the petition was moved, which originally contained the expression 'an audacious aspersion calculated to convey gross misrepresentation of the fact,' but was afterward modified at the instance of Grenville into 'the complaint is frivolous and the aspersions are groundless.' There were at that time no reporters, and many of the brilliant speeches that have been handed down to us owe much of their eloquence to the men of letters who transmitted them in their own language.

'Northumberland House: Feb. 2, Thursday, 1769.

'My Lord—I was last night extremely unfortunate; I went down to the House of Commons to pick up some intelligence for your Grace, and had made up the inclosed Packet; but expecting every moment the question would have been put, I waited till I lost the post. Indeed, I had depended upon getting it sent by Mr. Fraser after 12 o'clock, but upon application to him found that the new regulations at the Post Office of keeping the office open on all nights alike, had not yet been adopted at the Secretaries of State's offices; for they still observed the distinction of Bye-post-nights.

'I stayed down at the House till after 1 o'clock. When I sealed up the inclosed letter, Mr. Grenville was by a fine plausible speech trying to divest the motion of its sting, by the softening expressions at the bottom of the paper. He was seconded by Sir William Meredith and Mr. Edmund Burke, who had been speaking a good while when I (being rather indisposed) was obliged to come away. From what I could gather the opposition were trying to spin out the debate in order that the neutrals might be tired and driven away to their beds, and that they might delay the putting of the question till the House was got thin, and so have a better chance of success. This is my own surmise, for I perceived many young members coming away when I did.'

Dr. Percy took little interest in politics and rarely alludes to the troubles connected with Wilkes that so closely concerned the Northumberland family. On hearing of the brutal behaviour of the mob on the Lord Mayor's day, 1769, the Duchess wrote to him: 'Good God! what will the licentiousness of the populace end

in?' and in 1770 she added, 'I flatter myself that Messrs. Wilkes and Horne will unmask each other and the poor, deluded people be convinced that they are a couple of profligate seditious rascals.'

Writing to his cousin in 1774, Dr. Percy said:

'In the North, I was taken up with most disagreeable election-disputes which are now happily over, and our two young Lords are both chosen by majorities, which do them honour and manifest great attachment to their family. Worcester has had its share of bustle, and I see the friend of Wilkes is thrown out there as his friends were with us in Westminster. Judge how disagreeably I have spent this summer, I who hate election squabbles: who yet, from the beginning of July to the end of September, had no respite from them: we had the misfortune to have among our opponents a patriot bred in the school of Wilkes, who descended to all the most ill-bred dirty arts of slander and falsehood. After fighting in the Papers for three months there, without intermission, Parliament was unexpectedly dissolved, and we were suddenly obliged to hasten up to Westminster, where came on one of the most busy contests ever known in this Kingdom. However, both that and the contest for Northumberland ended so much to the honour of the Family I reside with, as to make amends for all the fatigue.'

The Duchess of Northumberland meanwhile had been stricken with an illness that eventually proved fatal. With characteristic pluck and energy she wandered about the Continent in search of health, and, though she had to be lifted in and out of her post-chaise, valiantly declared, 'I bless God I am as well as I ever was in my life.' She wrote Thomas Percy a series of amusing letters, wherein she described such

a variety of objects, people, and places that had jumbled themselves together in the storehouse of her memory, that she found it almost impossible to disentangle one distinct idea from the heap. But she promised on her return to answer a hundred questions a day, and by that assistance 'hoped to collect herself a little.' She writes from Cologne:

'I take it for granted you ask where I have been and what I have seen; the particulars would furnish a volume, but briefly the Tresor at Rheims, le Bout du Monde, the Cathedral at Basle, Death's Dance, Excellent Sauce for broiled salmon, an amateur who does not look upon himself as a printseller, but who out of his particular predilection for me has suffered me to buy 2 of his prints for a guinea which I might have had for two shillings at any print shop in the Strand, St. Martin cutting off his cloke without any lame beggar to give it to, the kettle in which a Jew was boiled in hot oil, the ropes in which (had they not drubbed him out of their country) Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, intended to have hanged all the Swiss burgomasters in Vandyke ruffs, the Czarina's own brother living in a house in a dirty street not fit for an apothecary, the weapons of all the suicides in Basle, the Moorish King who lolls out his long red tongue every minute, a Snyders which Mr. Kleindorff won't let me have under 50 guineas, little canoes (gliding quick as lightning down the rapid current of the Rhine) made of 3 planks only, a mad officer who chose to make a visit in the middle of the night, the review of a Swiss regiment in the French service, beggars running by the chaise side playing all the time on the violin, the camp of Rodolph, Comte de Hapsburgh, where he first received the news of his being

elected Emperor, the stone chair in which the Kings of France are crowned, the Bibliothèque at Basle, a large collection of Holbein's drawings, a set of galley slaves, the fountain de la Suze where the Comtesse de la Suze sigh'd out her Love Elegées, a priest so learned that he asked me if German or Italian was the language of the English, and Plombière which seems to be at the centre of the earth. (The deuce take these Capuchins, they sing their masses so loud they addle my brains.) My letter puts me in mind of Lord Worcester's Scantlings, but I really have nothing else to say, except that I am with real friendship, Dear Sir,

'Yr. most obliged and affectionate humble Servant,

'ELIZABETH NORTHUMBERLAND.'

The Duchess's lively letters are crowded out of this volume, for the authorities demand that Dr. Percy's varied life should be recorded in 100,000 words, although other powers, with whom they are not always in complete accord, advertise the value of their books by the 'multitude of words.' Happily the Duchess's condensed style enables us to give one short specimen of her writing, which anticipates the time when the mind of the author will be in such close affinity with that of his readers, that words will be unnecessary and his meaning will be flashed into their brains by the concentrated power of thought. In Percy's day the cry was for more padding. 'If your Lordship,' wrote his publisher, 'would add any little poem to render the volume more apparently considerable, I should feel much obliged by your doing so.'

The Duchess died on December 5, 1776, on her sixtieth birthday. Through life she had filled her position with dignity, generosity and spirit, her exten-

sive charities and her encouragement of art and literature, her tender affection for her family, her warm attachment to her friends, and her goodness to her servants caused her to be long lamented. She left two surviving sons, Hugh, Earl Percy, M.P. for Westminster, and Lieut.-General in his Majesty's service in America, who succeeded to the baronies which she held in her own right of Percy, Lucy, Poynings, Fitz Payne, Brian and Latimer, and Lord Algernon Percy, member for the county of Northumberland.

She was buried in great state; her funeral in Westminster Abbey occasioned an uproar. The mob broke down the canopy of Prince John of Eltham's tomb, and the confusion was so great that the service had to be postponed till after midnight. Several bystanders had also been killed by the falling of a monument when the Duchess's only daughter was buried in the Abbey.

Dr. Percy preserved a petition in the style of Master Dogberry in Shakespeare's play 'Much Ado About Nothing,' addressed to the Duke of Northumberland in 1776, after the death of the Duchess, 'to prove that Shakespeare has not carried his fiction to an extravagance beyond Nature.'

'Please your Grace,—As I was always a Benefactor to the Late Duchess, to the sorrow of Thousands, and having the loss of such a Good Christian and Charitable humaine Lady, and hoping that her soul is in the Bosom of Abram this present time, with the Sweetness of Heaven, with the Angels of God to accompany her soul for ever and ever.

. . . . . .

'I hope your Grace will be so good to consider my affliction and look on me as object of Charity and

having Lived in the parish of St. James's for this 36 years, and living still in Silver Street near Golden Square for this 30 years.

'Lewis Gwillim

After this sad event Dr. Percy was detained in close attendance on the Duke, who was inconsolable at the loss of his excellent Duchess, and was himself but just recovered from a severe fit of gout. In order to divert his thoughts he was removed from Northumberland House to Lord Algernon Percy's house in Harley Street.

Percy wrote to his cousin:

'The Duchess is regretted by none more than myself; however, my prospects suffer no alteration; the Duke has twice since her death renewed the kindest promises to me and apologised for its not having been in his power to serve me hitherto.'

After William Cleveland had been married about two years, Dr. Percy began to anticipate that his cousin 'might have occasion to look abroad for heirs.' But far from suppressing thoughts that may at times assault the soul of a saint, Percy acted on the principle of giving a runaway horse his head, and with an honesty that at any rate commands our respect, he expresses them clearly to the very person from whom he has most reason to conceal them. He continues:

'I should very sincerely congratulate you on an increase of your family, but should Heaven ordain it otherwise and should you have occasion to look abroad for heirs I recommend my children to your favour; I should detest myself if I were capable of forming one irregular desire about anything you possess, and I can assure you that every act of friendship may at all times

be claimed of me by yourself, your spouse, and whatever children Providence may send you.'

However, contrary to Dr. Percy's anticipations, a daughter was born to William Cleveland and his wife. When congratulating his cousin, Percy added, 'Should you ever want Gossips [God-parents] on this or any future occasion you may command the best service of either Mrs. Percy or myself; consider us as a *Corps de Reserve*.'

Unhappily the reserves were never called up, for within a fortnight Percy was obliged to console his cousin with the reflection of having 'been allowed by Heaven to add a new candidate to the choir of its blessed inhabitants.' He reminded him that Mrs. Percy and himself had known what it was 'to have their infants torn from them at different periods of their dawning reason, when they had taken deep root in their hearts.'

A few days afterwards he had to write again to condole on the death of Mrs. Cleveland:

'How shall we be able to give you comfort under a distress, which no misfortune in this life can equal? When I reflect what my own feelings would be under such a calamity I cannot even attempt to console you. May the Almighty soften, by His Grace, the severity of your sufferings! It was never *intended* we should be perfectly happy in this state of imperfection, and therefore the Divine Dispenser often lends us His choicest gifts but a short time, and withdraws them suddenly, when we least expect it, to school us, and wean us from this present existence. But even in the deepest distress the immortality of the soul and the blessed hope of reunion are consolatory reflections. May these enable you to discharge the remaining duties

of life! I am not enough my own master to be able to visit you, and the female part of my family cannot go a journey without an escort. As soon as you have discharged the last solemn duties which I wish to Heaven I was near enough to assist you in, come and spend some time with us in this sequestered village where your grief shall be inviolate. Your mind must be kept in a constant agony by the intrusion of your friends—unavoidable in a populous city. You will be here undisturbed till you have acquired firmness again to bear the duties of society. Here you will find 100 agreeable amusements to cheer your drooping mind. We will together revise your intended inscription' [for his wife's monument].

We cannot doubt that at such a moment Percy was not only able to feel for his cousin but *with* him. It has been said that a man's character is as clearly revealed by the letters he receives as by those he writes, and among Percy's letters is one written under the same sad conditions from George Low, a Scotch minister:

'On Thursday I was obliged to blend the very half of my soul with the dust, together with our child. I need say no more, for you can feel for me.'

Only to one who could understand would a man have thus expressed himself.

After a time Percy wrote to his cousin:

'Your heavy depression seems to hang upon you with so little abatement I can only recommend you as a man and a Christian to try and assume a fortitude, which I fear I could very ill practise myself under similar circumstances.'

The remedy he proposed resembled that prescribed by Mr. Caxton, who held that:

'In a great grief you cannot divert the mind, you

must abstract, absorb, and bury it in an abyss.' . . . 'Bring the brain to act upon the heart.' . . . 'When some one sorrow gets hold of your heart like a monomania—when you think, because Heaven has denied you that on which you had set your heart, that all your life must be a blank, diet yourself on the biography of good and great men. See how little space—scarce a page perhaps is given to some grief similar to your own; and how triumphantly the life sails on beyond it! You thought the wing was broken: it was but a bruised feather. See what life leaves behind when all is done! a summary of positive facts far out of the region of sorrow and suffering, linking themselves with the being of the world.'

On this principle, in order to take off his mind from meditating only on its severe misfortunes, Percy recommended his cousin to take up the study of heraldry and genealogy. 'For the honour of your family,' he wrote, 'it will be a pity if Dr. Nash's Book of Worcestershire should come out without all the information that can be procured.' Of a common ancestress, Elizabeth Pembrudge, Percy wrote triumphantly:

'The family of Pembruge was one of the most respectable in your part of England, being descended from a brother of Sir Richard Pembruge, K.G. in the reign of King Edward III. But now you will ask, how do I know this to be true? Upon the best authority possible: upon the Testimony of her own son, given upon oath in 1682, at the Herald's Visitation at Worcester. To comfort you for our not being able to ascertain the exact mode of your descent from the Walsh family, I here send you a table of your descent from the ancient Princes of *Wales* and Kings of *England*, every article of which can be proved from

undoubted Records. It is to old *Elizabeth Pembruge* that you are indebted for this fine piece of Genealogy.'

But, as Gray said: 'Some spirit of genius more than common is required to teach a man how to employ himself. To find oneself business is the great art of life,' and even in the midst of all his engrossing labours, Sir Walter Scott could only say that his broken 'heart had been handsomely pieced again; the crack would remain to his dying day.'

From William Cleveland's subsequent career we gather that these studies did not prove so beneficial, as the strict course of geology with which Mr. Caxton cured a disconsolate widower. He 'dipped him deep into Gneiss and mica schist. Amidst the first strata he suffered the watery action to expend itself upon cooling crystallized masses, and by the time he had got him into the tertiary period, amongst the transition chalks of Maestricht and the conchiferous marls of Gosau, he was ready for a new wife.'

CHAPTER VIII

1758–1779

THUS far we have seen Dr. Percy among his family and at his work, and now we must follow him into the world in which he delighted to spend those moments of leisure and recreation, the disposal of which most clearly reveals a man's character.

Percy loved society, and from it, as Dr. Johnson declared, only those who find themselves the worse, without making the world better, may be permitted to retire. His name, either as Dr. Percy or Bishop of Dromore, is constantly mentioned by Fanny Burney, Boswell, and others, among those present at the small dinners and assemblies of the inner circle of the literati. He was assiduous in his attendance at Court and at the Royal birthdays, and could not resist the curiosity of seeing all the 'reigning topics of the day.' If, on his arrival in London, he found everyone talking of the King of Denmark, Percy sat the whole night in the pit at the opera, just under the Royal box, in order to observe him. This pretty, slender youth of nineteen, fair and delicate as a girl, who with polite good humour took great pains in pleasing others, would, he thought, have looked as well in petticoats. Unwilling to mortify 'even the very performers at the opera,' His Majesty joined in expressing applause whenever it seemed proper. The easy looks of his attendants, as well as his own constant smiles, showed his benevolence, and gave promise of his proving a blessing to his subjects.

But Percy showed himself a poor judge of character, for this ruler 'of ladylike appearance' was the man who imprisoned and cruelly ill-treated his wife, Princess Caroline Matilda, the sister of George III., boasting that he only refrained from putting her to death out of regard for his Royal brother-in-law. Dr. Percy's chief delight, however, was not in these brilliant circles, where, as Johnson said when he visited Ranelagh, it went to his heart to reflect that there probably was not a single being around him who would not be 'afraid to go home and think.' He was constantly to be seen among the literary society in London, and, like Gray, he loved those who 'leave behind them some traces of their journey through the world.' Such people are often destitute of that wealth which should insure almost every good thing, for without money 'a man can neither live as he pleases, nor where he pleases, nor with whom he pleases,' yet the poet felt almost comforted for the loss of his fortune when he saw how many rich people enjoy none of these blessings.

Thomas Percy's friendship for Oliver Goldsmith was of the kind that makes each meeting an event, therefore we are able to follow its course by means of his private notes. They first met on Wednesday, February 21, 1759, as the guests of Dr. Grainger at the Temple Exchange Coffee House, which was used for purposes of social intercourse by many who, like Goldsmith, 'lived in a garret writing for bread, and expecting to be dunned for a milk score.' 'The gates of the Muses,' like the Kingdom of Heaven, are hard but not impossible for the rich to enter into, though 'nothing is more apt to introduce a man to them than poverty.' At the coffee house, those who, like Goldsmith, also practised the art of medicine, could be consulted by

their patients, and letters might be received and written by such as were unwilling to reveal their humble dwellings. Percy met Goldsmith again at Dodsley's on February 26, and on Saturday, March 3, before returning to Easton Maudit, he sat all the morning with him at his rooms in Green Arbour Court, near the Old Bailey. He found him miserably lodged in a wretched, dirty room, revising the proofs of his 'Enquiry into Polite Learning in Europe,' which was at that time being printed for Dodsley and was published on April 3. He possessed but one chair, which he offered to his visitor, and sat himself in the window.

Goldsmith was at this time almost beginning the world at the age of thirty-one. Eight years of disappointment, anguish and study had worn him down, and he describes his own pale, melancholy visage, with great wrinkles between the brows, an eye disgustingly severe and a big wig. He had no doubt, as he declared, contracted the suspicious manner, as well as the hesitating speech of the parcel of designing beings among whom he found himself, but we cannot believe that a man who found more pleasure in doing good-natured things than uneasiness in the doing of them was possessed of a countenance 'that looked like ill-nature itself.'

Dr. Percy found that he could not spend a morning in the company of one who loved his fellow-men without witnessing some call for help. The conversation was interrupted by a poor, ragged little girl, who rapped gently at the door, and, dropping a curtsey, begged for the loan of a few coals. This visit took place a month before Dr. Percy's marriage, and it is probable that his new interests diverted his mind for a while from his literary friends, for it is not until

May 25, 1761, that he mentions having dined and drunk tea with Dr. Goldsmith in Wine Licence[1] Court, Fleet Street, where he was now lodged. Together they visited the exhibition in Spring Gardens, and on this occasion Percy tells us he furnished his friend with material for a magazine of which he was editor—possibly the 'Monthly Review,' to which he certainly contributed about this time.

Goldsmith's circumstances as well as his surroundings must have meanwhile improved considerably, for on Sunday, May 31, when Percy supped with him, he had much company to meet Samuel Johnson.[2] The great man was escorted by Dr. Percy, who, when he called for him, was struck by the unwonted neatness of his dress. The sight of his new suit of clothes, and new wig nicely powdered, was so unexpected that Percy could not help inquiring the cause of this transformation. 'Why, sir,' said Johnson, 'I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice, and I am desirous this night to show him a better example.'

On the awkwardness of Dr. Goldsmith's appearance, a supposed 'Dialogue in the Shades' between himself and Lord Chesterfield appeared in the papers:

Lord Chesterfield: 'Believe me, Goldsmith, if you had paid a little more court to the graces and mixed with the world, you would have passed your life more comfortably and reaped greater advantages from your abilities. How awkward must a fellow appear, stammering if he attempts to utter a syllable and seeming as great a stranger to his own arms and legs as to the

[1] Wine Licence Court is written in Percy's handwriting.

[2] A note is added to the Memorandum: 'N.B. This is the first visit Johnson ever made to Goldy.'

company which embarrasses him. I made the graces my study and found them of more use to me than any other acquisition.'

Goldsmith here naturally inquired why, if these accomplishments were so essential, Lord Chesterfield's own son, Mr. Stanhope, had failed in them.

'He wanted industry,' replied Lord Chesterfield.

Goldsmith: 'You entertain too high an opinion of what human nature is capable. To be a genius and a fine gentleman are almost incompatible. Can any composition that you or Bolingbroke wrote compare with the works of Addison, who as you say was awkward; of Johnson, whom you have ridiculed; or even with mine, the last of the Muses? The least a man of talents can expect for pleasing and instructing the world is lenity to his foibles, but I must beg your Lordship's pardon, for yonder I see Addison and Virgil in deep conversation; I promised to meet them; they are persons I never stand upon ceremony with, for they are both as ill-bred as myself.'

Goldsmith sought in vain for an instance of man in his wildest state entirely fulfilling the ideal of beauty unadorned, for he was obliged to admit in his 'Animated Nature' that 'we have a very wrong idea of savage finery, and are apt to suppose that like the beast of the forest they rise, and are dressed with a shake; but the reverse is true: for no birth-night beauty takes more pains in adorning her person than they.' When the Cherokee kings visited England, Goldsmith waited three hours while they were dressing. They had their boxes of oil and ochre, their fat and their perfumes, as he found to his cost; for owing to his sympathetic manner of wearing his heart on his sleeve, when at length they appeared, with a sudden embrace they covered his

cheeks with the oil and ochre that adorned their own.

During the month of June 1761, Goldsmith, who was then engaged in writing his 'Vicar of Wakefield,' was frequently visited by Dr. Percy, who was busy collecting his 'Reliques.' On June 3 he spent the evening with him, and on the 6th, 10th and 12th he called on him.

It was probably owing to their close intercourse during the time their great works were preparing that, in 1765, when Dr. Goldsmith printed his beautiful ballad of 'The Hermit,' he was taxed by the inferior scribblers with having taken the idea of it from 'The Friar of Orders Grey' in Percy's 'Reliques' that appeared the same year. His chief detractor, Kenrick, who constantly denounced him as Ritson did Percy, invited the public 'to compare the insipidity of Dr. Goldsmith's negus with the genuine flavour of Dr. Percy's champagne.' Goldsmith declared that, if any resemblance existed, Percy's ballad was the imitation, as he had read 'The Hermit' to him two years previously, when he had formed his on the same plan. Percy allowed that he had taken fragments of ancient ballads in Shakespeare's plays, whose beauty consisted in their pathetic simplicity, and together with a small quotation from Beaumont, and additional stanzas of his own, had woven them into a poem, which he called 'The Friar of Orders Grey.' It was parodied by Ritson as follows:

> It was a jovial tinker,
> All of the north countrie,
> As he walk'd forth along the way
> He sang right merrily.

Goldsmith vindicated the priority of his poem in a letter that appeared in the 'St. James's Chronicle' in

a Charicature of D^r. Goldsmith
etched by W^m. Bunbury.

The original is inscribed in Bishop Percy's own handwriting.

June 1767, but he allowed that the story in both of them was taken from a very ancient ballad beginning 'Gentle Herdsman.'

After Goldsmith's death Percy added the following note to his 'Friar of Orders Grey:'

'As the foregoing song has been thought to have suggested to our late excellent Poet, Dr. Goldsmith, the plan of his beautiful ballad of "Edwin and Angelina," it is but justice to his memory to declare that his poem was written first, and that, if there is any imitation in the case, they will be found both to be indebted to the beautiful old ballad, "Gentle Herdsman," printed in the 2nd volume of the "Reliques" which Dr. Goldsmith had much admired in MS. and has finely improved.'

Finding that the Duchess (then Countess) of Northumberland had shown a taste for ballads by patronising Percy's 'Reliques,' Goldsmith addressed his poem to her. He had already been invited to wait on Lord Northumberland after he returned from his period of vice-royalty in Ireland. Unfortunately Goldsmith, with his usual absent-mindedness, wasted on the Groom of the Chambers the complimentary address he had prepared for his Excellency; and when the Lord Lieutenant appeared he was so confused that he was obliged to retire without having explained the object of his visit. Lord and Lady Northumberland preferred Percy's precise, reserved and stately manner to the uncouth and genial Goldsmith, with his thick, short, clumsy figure, and a face that he himself declared to be 'ugly enough.' He came of a family 'whose hearts were always in the right place, but whose heads seemed to be doing anything but what they ought.' His own father had served as a model for the large-minded and warm-hearted Vicar of Wakefield, and the

simplicity that prevailed in his family not only lent a charm to his writing but gave his own character that singleness of mind and generosity that made all the world love little Goldy, as he was familiarly called by his friends. Worldly wisdom was a lesson he never could learn, and of this Percy had a plentiful supply.

Had all men Goldsmith's gift of self-knowledge and power of expressing it, then, indeed, might we say with Dr. Johnson, that a man's biography is best written by himself. No description of the poet can ever equal his own when he declared himself to be 'fond of enjoying the present, careless of the future; his sentiments, those of a man of sense; his actions, those of a fool; of fortitude able to stand unmoved at the bursting of an earthquake, yet of sensibility to be affected by the breaking of a teacup.' He had humour enough to laugh at his own foibles, and described himself as a 'philosophical vagabond.' He confessed that he was often charitable to excess, and, forgetting the rules of justice, placed himself in the very position of those who thanked him for his bounty. He was, therefore, a prey to every variety of beggar. There was the pretentious French adventurer, Colonel de Champigny, who extorted a subscription of 7½ guineas for his book, 'La Nouvelle Histoire d'Angleterre,' when Goldsmith had not more than 10 guineas in the world, receiving it with all the air of conferring a favour. This worthy, who was shut up in the bailiff's house for debt, wrote to Dr. Goldsmith saying that his wife's relative, Lord Westmorland, on his deathbed declared he was proud of the connection, and was glad his cousin had married into such a good family.

Then there was a helpless and dishonest beggar, W. Griffin, whom Goldsmith and Garrick had recom-

mended as an usher at a school, whence he had taken the earliest opportunity of making good his escape after robbing the house; he wrote:

'I beg that you will be kind enough to let me know what you think I am fitt for, and whether I should prosper if I consecrated my life to the Muses? I know that a man may be indifferent in many other states of life, but that a poet must be a good one, or none at all.'

Some others tried flattery, declaring their confidence in his power to sympathise with the distressed, and his generosity in interesting himself in their concerns.

John Oakman wrote from Orange, Great Swallow Street, Carnaby Market, and addressed him as 'The Good-Natured Man' in compliment to his comedy:

> Oh! Doctor, assist a *poor Bard* who is ill,
> Without e'er a nurse, e'er a potion or pill,
> From your kindness he hopes for some ease.
> Oh! would your good nature but shine forth just now,
> In a manner I'm sure your good sense will tell how,
> Your servant Most Humble 'twould please.

In his practice of physic Goldsmith had always had plenty of patients, but he got no fees.

An actress wrote to Goldsmith asking the favour of an introduction to David Garrick, adding that it would be an insult to his benevolence to make an apology for giving him an opportunity of assisting a fellow-creature.

Even the young, who only required a frolic, obtained his assistance, as the following note, which, in his haste to oblige, breaks from the third person into the first, will show:

'Doctor Goldsmith's best respects to Mrs. Percy, he requests the favour of two tickets for two young Ladies for the Masquerade on Friday night. If she can procure them for him, it will be a singular obligation,

and make two young Ladies extremely happy. I have not seen Mr. Percy for some time, but hope this winter we shall frequently have the happiness of being together.

'Tuesday. Brick Court, Temple.'

In his days of extreme poverty Goldsmith would assemble the children of his landlady and others in his room and induce them to dance to the music of his flute.

During the spring of 1763, Dr. Percy visited him at Canonbury House, Middlesex, and at Islington, where he sometimes retired for the purpose of devoting himself to literature. And in November 1764 he drank tea, dined or spent the evening with Goldsmith on the 16th, 17th, 21st, 22nd, 26th, 28th and 30th, at which time he was lodged in the butler's rooms on the Library Staircase in the Temple. In 1765, the year the 'Reliques' were published, Percy called on him on March 26, and on April 28 dined with him and Dr. Johnson at the Feathers Tavern. It was probably about this time that Percy offered Goldsmith the use of his Vicarage. Whether the visit to Easton Maudit ever took place we do not know, but the following practical inquiries show that it was in contemplation:

'To The Rev. Mr. Percy, Northumberland House.

'Dear Percy,—I have been thinking of your Northamptonshire offer. I beg you'll send me an answer to the following queries:

'1. In the first place are there any prying, troublesome neighbours?

'2. Can I have a chamber to myself and can I buy coals, etc.?

'3. Will I not cumber the house, and take up the room of others?

'4. How long can you spare the apartment?

'5. Is there a stage? [coach] The price? and can my books be carried down?

'6. Can I have milk, meat, and tea in the place?

'And lastly, will it be in any way inconvenient to you and Mrs. Percy? And when will you want to be down yourselves?

'I am, your faithful friend,

'OLIVER GOLDSMITH.'

On Friday, January 29, 1768, Dr. Percy was present at the first representation of Dr. Goldsmith's play, 'The Good-Natured Man.' The author, with his usual diffidence, considered its reception on the opening night proved it to be a failure, and with characteristic honesty confessed his mortification before a large company of friends, who were dining with Dr. Percy at the chaplain's table at St. James's Palace. Dr. Johnson declared unfeelingly that 'no man should be expected to sympathise with the sorrows of vanity.' Fortified by the bravery of a scarlet waistcoat trimmed with gold lace, he had himself undergone a similar ordeal, and when asked how he felt on the ill-success of his play 'Irene' he answered, 'Like the Monument.' Goldsmith, however, entertained his hearers with a description of his feelings when the play was hissed, and how he tried later in the evening, at a meeting of the Literary Club, to chat gaily with his friends, and, though suffering horrid tortures, to show his indifference by singing his favourite song, 'An old woman tossed in a blanket seventeen times as high as

the moon.' He made more noise than usual to cover the anguish of his heart.

Dr. Percy was present again at the ninth night of the play, on which, as well as the third and sixth nights, the profits, according to custom, were appropriated to the author.

On January 15, 1768, Dr. Percy had been introduced as a member to the Club of which 'Reynolds was the Romulus.' The following memorandum was found among Dr. Percy's papers written in his own hand :

'1764. The Club first proposed and founded by Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, Soho, which Boswell has denominated the *Literary Club*, though it was a title they never assumed themselves, has been particularly described both in his Life of Johnson and by Mr. Malone in his account of Sir Joshua Reynolds, yet by neither of them accurately, as it had been established many years before either of them were elected members.

'The following particulars which are more correct are imparted by one of the early members. It was not founded before the winter of 1764, if so soon, and at first consisted of only *ten* members: who, it was intended, should be men of such talents that, if only two of them should meet for the evening, they should be able to entertain each other : new members were to be elected by ballot and one black-ball was sufficient for exclusion.

'The first ten members were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Burke and his father-in-law Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, Topham Beauclerk, Bennet Langton, Antony Chamier, Samuel Dyer, and Sir John Hawkins. They met and supped on Monday evenings.

'After some time Topham Beauclerk ceased to attend: and Hawkins, having disgusted the company by some disrespectful treatment of Burke, sent a letter to excuse his future attendance, as inconsistent with the early hours adopted by his family. This was in the year 1768.

'On this the Club proceeded to elect some new members, and then for the first time agreed to increase their number to 12. On this occasion Mr. Beauclerk desired to be restored to the Society, and the following *three* new members were introduced on Monday evening, February 15, 1768: Sir Robert Chambers, Dr. Percy, and George Colman.

'The Club continued to meet every Monday evening till December 1772, when it was altered to Friday evening, and two vacancies having been made by death, they were supplied on March 12, 1773, by the Earl of Charlemont and David Garrick,[1] and two other vacancies being made soon after, they were filled up on April 2 by Sir William Jones, and on April 30, 1773, by James Boswell. The number was still limited to 12.

'On Friday, March 4, 1774, three new members were introduced, viz. Charles Fox, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Dr. George Fordyce: and the same evening George Steevens was elected.

'Either about this time or soon after the number was increased to 30, and in 1775, instead of supping together once a week, they resolved to dine together once a fortnight during the session of Parliament, and

[1] Garrick had long intended to join the Club, and said he thought he would be of them. 'Be of us!' shouted Johnson indignantly, when this was repeated to him, 'the first Duke in the land has no right to use such language.' However, on Garrick's death, Johnson ordered that the Club should observe a year's widowhood, during which period no fresh member should be elected.

they so continued, but some years after removed to Pantler's in St. James's Street.'

In 1810 Percy was the only survivor of the original members of the Club.

During Dr. Johnson's tour in Scotland he and Boswell amused themselves by the thought that, if the Literary Club set up a college at St. Andrews, and each member taught what he best could in the several departments of learning and taste, they would rebuild the city, and draw a wonderful concourse of students. Johnson thus distributed the offices:

Boswell, Scotch Law; Burke, Politics and Eloquence; Garrick, Elocution; Langton, Greek; Colman, Latin; Dr. Nugent, Physic; Lord Charlemont, Modern History; Beauclerk, Natural Philosophy; Rt. Hon. A. Vesey, Irish Antiquities and Celtic Learning; Sir William Jones, Oriental Languages; Goldsmith, Poetry and Ancient History; Antony Chamier (Under-Secretary of State), Commercial Politics; Sir Joshua Reynolds, Painting and the Arts; Sir Robert Chambers, the Law of England.

Dr. Johnson at first said, 'I'll trust theology to nobody but myself.' But upon consideration that Percy was a clergyman, it was agreed that he should teach practical divinity and British antiquities; Dr. Johnson himself, logic, metaphysics and scholastic divinity.

For a short period an entire separation took place between Goldsmith and Percy in consequence of the dispute about the authenticity of the Bristol poems. Goldsmith had drawn attention at the Royal Academy dinner to the ancient manuscript discovered at Bristol, which it was supposed had been written by Rowley in the fifteenth century. He was laughed at for the

enthusiasm with which he supported his belief, though all his hearers disagreed in the measure of their faith. Walpole in particular derided his credulity, and boasted that he might, if he had chosen, have had the honour of ushering the great discovery into the learned world, for the unfortunate Chatterton, by whose genius they had been forged, had first applied to him for help. But his mirth was soon dashed by hearing that their author had destroyed himself, and, cynic as he was, he heartily wished he had been the dupe of the poor young man of seventeen whose genius, had he chosen honestly to acknowledge his own writings instead of palming them off as ancient manuscripts, would have placed him among the highest rank of writers. Percy had been accused by Ritson of a similar fraud with regard to the 'Reliques' and also his Chinese Novel. He opposed Goldsmith by detecting the forgery of Chatterton, and though the quarrel was entirely forgotten before 1771, the controversy continued for many years after Goldsmith's death.

In 1773, Dr. Percy had received from Lord Dacre specimens of writing on parchment attributed to Rowley. The result of 'this ocular inspection,' he declared, quite decided the question of their being undoubtedly spurious and modern. Thomas Butler, the keeper of the ancient records of the Northumberland family, who was one of the best judges of old writings in England, happened to be staying at Alnwick at the time. Having never heard of the controversy concerning the Bristol poetry, he was quite impartial, and immediately pronounced them the most bungling attempts to imitate old writings that he ever saw. The characters were not 'consistent with any era whatever,' and were written by a modern pen that had endeavoured

to render them as obscure as possible. The writer went on no principle and had made random guesses at the old alphabets. The parchment itself, in order to imitate the old, was stained yellow on the back, and the ink was also so contrived that it should be very faint. Though the style of the poetry was not ancient, Percy still considered it highly deserving of publication, not only on account of its artistic merit, but also to show what human invention is capable of performing. He not only believed Chatterton to be capable of writing the poems attributed to Rowley, but pronounced him to have been one of the greatest geniuses that ever existed in the world.

Fearful lest these precious specimens should come to any accident in the post, Dr. Percy entrusted them to the hands of a faithful friend, Sir Robert Chambers, an Indian Judge, who had been staying at Alnwick, and begged him to deliver them to Lord Dacre in Bruton Street. The following letter, written sixteen years afterwards, when Percy had become Bishop of Dromore, will show how the trust was fulfilled :

'Calcutta : Nov. 9, 1789.

'My dear Lord,—During my residence in this country, in which I have now spent fifteen years, I have been honoured with two letters from you—one dated 1778 was sent by a young gentleman who kept it by him at Bombay. At length, when I received it in the year 1785, I was sick, and no ship was despatched to England for some months.

'I now beg leave to approach your Lordship in the Oriental mode, with a peace-offering in my hand, and have directed my London bookseller to forward to you the Transactions lately published here by the Asiatick Society.

'Your letter of 1778 surprised me by mentioning *two* pieces of parchment attributed to Rowley, the supposed Bristol poet, as having been in my possession. I never had but *one*.

'The falsification being clumsy and unskilful, I cannot think there was much intrinsic worth in that scrap of writing, but it might have had an accidental value as an evidence of guilt in the unhappy youth who produced it, and on that account I am sorry that it has been lost by me: although I am no Nabob, I would willingly give an hundred pounds to recover it. Of the manner in which it was lost I can only form conjectures. It might possibly be stolen; it might be carried away from my chambers in the Temple by some attorney's clerk, who, seeing it on my table, might snatch it up in haste by mistake for a *Bailpiece*; or it might be lost at sea, in a portfolio which my servant, in a sudden roll of the ship let fall from my cabin window, being obliged to employ both his hands in saving himself.'

On September 4, 1771, Bennet Langton wrote to remind Dr. Goldsmith of a promise that he and Sir Joshua Reynolds had made to visit himself and his wife, Lady Rothes, at Langton, near Spilsby. He said he was hoping soon to read Goldsmith's 'History of England' and begged to know 'in what forwardness he was with his "Natural History."' He added, 'I hope *Poetry* takes up some of your attention.'

Goldsmith wrote in reply:

'Brick Court, Temple,
'Sept. 7, 1771.

'My dear Sir,—Since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, I have been almost wholly in the country at a

farmer's house, quite alone, trying to write a comedy. It is now finished, but when or how it will be acted, or whether it will be acted at all, are questions I cannot resolve. I am therefore so much employed upon that, that I am under the necessity of putting off my intended visit to Lincolnshire for this season. Reynolds is just returned from Paris and finds himself now in the case of a truant that must make up for his idle time by diligence. We have therefore agreed to postpone the affair till next Summer, when we hope to have the honour of waiting upon her Ladyship and you, and staying double the time of our late intended visit. We often meet, and never without remembering you. I see Mr. Beauclerk very often both in town and country. He is now going directly forward to become a second Boyle. Deep in Chemistry and Physics. Johnson has been down upon a visit to a country parson, Doctor Taylor, and is returned to his old haunt at Mrs. Thrale's. Burke is a farmer, *en attendant* a better place, but visiting about too. Every soul is visiting about and merry but myself. And that is hard too, as I have been trying these 3 months to do something to make people laugh. There have I been strolling about the hedges, studying jests with a most tragical countenance. The Natural History is about half finished, and I will shortly finish the rest. God knows I'm tired of this kind of finishing, which is but bungling work, and that not so much my fault as the fault of my scurvy circumstances. They begin to talk in town of the Opposition's gaining ground; the cry of liberty is still as loud as ever. I have published, or Davies has published for me, an 'Abridgment of the History of England,' for which I have been a good deal abused in the newspapers for betraying the liberties of the people. God knows I had no thought

for or against liberty in my head, my whole aim being to make up a book of a decent size, that, as Squire Richard says, would do no harm to nobody. However, they set me down as an arrant Tory and consequently an honest man. When you come to look at any part of it, you'll say that I am a sour Whig. God bless you, and with my most respectful compliments to her Ladyship,

'I remain, dear sir,

'Your most affectionate humble servant,

'OLIVER GOLDSMITH.'

Before their dispute on the subject of the Bristol poems, Dr. Percy had, in company with Mr. Gray, dined with Goldsmith on May 7, 1768, in a farm-house at Edgeware,[1] where he was writing his 'History of England.' After the death of Chatterton in 1770, a reconciliation took place, and Goldsmith visited Dr. Percy in his apartments at Northumberland House, and begged him to undertake his biography. He entrusted him with many valuable papers and spent a long wet afternoon dictating an account of his early life.

On April 30, 1772, Percy again visited Goldsmith in the farm-house at Edgeware, where he was writing his Natural History, entitled 'Animated Nature,' a task that he found 'was best worked at in the country.' On May 7, together with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Boswell and Mr. Langton, Dr. Percy dined with Goldsmith in the Temple, but in much better chambers than those he had before; probably this improvement was owing to the anticipated profits of his work. He had entered into an engagement, in February 1769, with his bookseller, Mr. Griffin, to compile his Natural

[1] Believed to be The Hyde, Hendon, on the Edgeware Road.

History in eight volumes at the rate of 100 guineas apiece, and was to be paid as the volumes were delivered. Before the year was out and the work was scarcely begun, he persuaded Griffin to advance him 500 guineas, and having spent the money he set about writing his 'History of England,' which Davies was to pay for only on its completion. Griffin was induced to pay him the whole of the 800 guineas before two-thirds of his 'Animated Nature' was completed. So he found himself somewhat in the position of Dr. Johnson, who declined giving a list of the patrons of his edition of Shakespeare, saying, 'Sir, I have two very cogent reasons for not printing a list of subscribers: one that I have lost all the names; the other that I have spent all the money.'

When at length his long-anticipated book on Natural History drew near completion, Goldsmith was at Windsor, and not wishing to return to London for another fortnight, he wrote to Dr. Percy and Mr. Cradock begging them to revise a proof of the work, which he said they would find lying upon his table in the Temple. At the same time he wrote on a slip of paper to his servant:

> Honest John,
> Give Doctor Percy
> My History of Animals which
> You will find amongst my books.

Percy and Cradock met by appointment, and found his chambers in grievous disorder, expensive volumes lay scattered about the tables, and tossed on the floor. Money was lying about from which his 'occasional manservant' paid any small bills that happened to be applied for. 'What, my dear friend,' exclaimed Goldsmith, when someone had remonstrated at his implicit trust in

Honest John's predecessor, Dennis, 'do you take Dennis for a thief?'

The subject with which the collaborators were expected to deal proved to be birds, and they found many of the necessary books of reference on the table.

'Do you know anything about birds?' asked Percy, smiling.

'Nothing,' replied Cradock, 'do you?'

'Not I,' rejoined Percy, 'I scarce know a goose from a swan; however, let us try what we can do.'

If his friends are to be believed, Goldsmith's own knowledge was almost as limited. When Johnson was informed that he was writing a history of 'Animated Nature' he said, 'Goldsmith, sir, will give us a very fine book on the subject; but if he can distinguish a cow from a horse, that I believe may be the extent of his knowledge of Natural History.' He said that Goldsmith had trusted too much to Buffon for his facts, and had transcribed into his book the statement that the cow sheds her horns every two years. Johnson wondered that Buffon, who lived in the country, should make such a mistake, but supposed that he had confounded the cow with the deer. According to Goldsmith, 'At three years old the cow sheds its horns and new ones arise in their place, which continue as long as it lives.'

But whatever might be the value of his information, Percy marvelled at the ease of Goldsmith's style. His prose flowed from him with such facility that in the whole quires of his 'Animated Nature' he had seldom had occasion to alter a single word. His style was free from mannerism, and faultless in its easy simplicity and the harmony of its periods. 'Just sit down as I do,' he said to his brother, 'and write forward until

you have filled your paper. It requires no thought, for my head has no share in all I write, my heart dictates the whole.' Like most great writers, Goldsmith expressed his thoughts in the smallest possible compass, and believed that if an angel wrote a book it would not be a folio. Perhaps his power of memory enabled him to form his sentences mentally, without committing them to paper, after the manner of Dr. Johnson, whom Dr. Percy had often heard murmuring his periods when careless observers thought he was saying his prayers. Goldsmith's poems were much more laboured, and were frequently corrected until scarce a word of the original remained. But had he been in the happy financial position of those authors whom the Muse visits not as a creditor but as a friend, he would, he declared, have confined himself to poetry, which he found 'no unpleasant employment, could a man only live by it!' He was entreated to devote some of his attention to it, for it was urged 'though the world has not obliged you, it is still your duty to oblige mankind.' At a Royal Academy dinner, when asked by a noble Lord why he forsook poetry, he answered, 'By courting the Muses, even if they smiled, I should only be rewarded by a draft of the waters of Helicon, and might go as naked as they do; but by dealing with the booksellers I drink wine, and wear good clothes, so as to be admitted to your Lordship's society and that of this good company.' His appointment by the King as historian to the Royal Academy of Painting carried no salary. It was 'like ruffles to a man who wants a shirt.'

On Tuesday, September 21, 1772, Percy called on Goldsmith, whom he found very ill in bed, and it was on this occasion, he believes, that the poet sent for Dr. James, and found such relief from his famous fever

powders that he was induced to place a confidence in their efficacy that eventually cost him his life. He was at that time engaged in writing his comedy 'She Stoops to Conquer.' On Sunday, October 4, Percy writes, 'I saw Goldsmith.'

On December 11 Percy attended the Club for the first time since the day of meeting had been altered to Friday. Till then it had met on Monday, ever since he became a member in 1768. He adds, 'there are still only 12 members.'

On Friday evening, January 16, 1773, Dr. Goldsmith read to the members of the Club his new comedy 'The Old House and New Inn,' which title was unanimously condemned; and after much labour to find a better, it was decided that it should be called 'She Stoops to Conquer.'

On Saturday, March 13, Percy went with Topham Beauclerk to the rehearsal of Goldsmith's new comedy, and on Monday the 15th, the eventful day of its first representation, he went to see it, but found the theatre so crowded that he could not get in. He must doubtless have been detained by his duties at Northumberland House too late to join Goldsmith's friends, who, though not over-sanguine as to the success of the piece, were determined to make a struggle on behalf of the author. Colman, the manager of Covent Garden, protested, when he lent his theatre, that 'She Stoops to Conquer' was one of the most eccentric productions that had ever been put on the stage. According to Richard Cumberland, Goldsmith's supporters assembled in all their strength for an early dinner at the Shakespeare Tavern, with Dr. Johnson presiding at the head of a long table. The poet silently placed himself at the president's side, and that evening took all his

raillery as patiently as Boswell did habitually. The whole company betook themselves in good time to their allotted posts, and awaited the awful drawing up of the curtain. The signals for plaudits were prearranged in a manner that gave everyone his cue. When Goldsmith expressed his doubts as to how some of his best jokes would be taken by the audience, the manager replied in a reassuring tone, 'Psha, my dear Doctor, do not be fearful of squibs when we have been sitting almost two hours on a barrel of gunpowder.' A phalanx of North British applauders under the banner of Major Mills, all good men and true, followed the lead of Adam Drummond, who was gifted with the loudest and most contagious laugh that ever echoed from human lungs. The neighing of a horse was a whisper to it, and the thunder of the theatre could not drown it, but he knew no more than the cannon on a battery when to give his fire. All eyes were fixed upon Dr. Johnson, who sat in a side box, and when he laughed everyone felt themselves at liberty to roar. Drummond, who was planted in an upper box above the stage, and in full view of the pit, followed the signals with so comic a rattle that he engrossed more attention than the actors. At length the pit took offence and began to hiss. Nevertheless, Goldsmith's followers congratulated themselves on having carried the play through, and triumphed not only over Colman's judgment but their own. When it was suggested that Goldsmith owed much of his success to the partiality of his friends, Johnson replied, 'No, sir, the partiality of his friends was always against him.' It required great faith on the part of anyone who knew little Goldsmith to believe that he had really written 'The Traveller' himself.

Though the applause given to the new piece on the first night was suspected of being a tribute of his friends' partiality, it was far exceeded by that on the second night, when uninterrupted laughter rang incessantly throughout the play. As Goldsmith explained, 'The undertaking of a comedy, not merely sentimental, was very dangerous, and Mr. Colman always thought it so. However, I ventured to trust it to the public, and I have every reason to be grateful.' Johnson knew of no comedy that had so much answered its end by making the audience merry.

After Goldsmith's death Colman paid a tribute to his memory in the prologue to 'The Chapter of Accidents,' 1780:

> When Fielding, Humour's favourite child, appeared,
> *Low* was the word, a word each author fear'd!
> Till cheer'd at length by Pleasantry's bright ray
> Nature and Mirth resum'd their legal sway,
> And Goldsmith's genius bask'd in open day.

For Goldsmith it was justly claimed that he had the merit of restoring 'genuine Comedy, that for some time had been disguised in the cast-off clothes of her stately and prudish sister Tragedy, which suited neither her stature nor her complexion. Goldsmith gave her a new gown that fitted her, and made her again look charming.'

On Thursday, March 18, the fourth night of the play and the author's first benefit, Dr. Percy had a place in the Duchess of Northumberland's box. On this occasion enthusiasm reached the highest pitch, and the theatre re-echoed with the loudest acclamations that had ever rung within its walls. The Duke of Gloucester had been present on the opening night, and the public, to show their sympathy with him in the

matter of the Royal Marriage Act, turned to him with loud applause at the words addressed by Hastings to Miss Neville, 'We'll go to France, for there, even among slaves, the laws of marriage are respected.' Goldsmith was too independent to strike out these words, even at the risk of offending the King. However, on May 5 the play was commanded by their Majesties. Though Goldsmith had triumphed over every annoyance and difficulty that had been put in his way, he declared he was very sick of the stage, and that ease and comfort he had certainly lost while the play was in agitation. When he was advised to wait until better performers could be procured, he answered, 'I should sooner that my play were damned by bad players than merely saved by good acting.'

An attempt was made to check Goldsmith's triumph on the ninth night by a letter in the 'London Packet' of March 24, 1773, which said: 'Mr. Goldsmith, correct your arrogance, reduce your vanity, and believe as a man, you are of the plainest sort, and as an author, but a mortal piece of mediocrity.'

Though signed 'Tom Tickle' the letter was thought to have been written by his detractor, Kenrick, a man whom Johnson described as one of the 'many who have made themselves public without making themselves known.' Goldsmith might well have waited for the revenge that time was sure to bring by recording his name among the immortals, while that of his assailant was entirely forgotten; but, unfortunately, the fighting instinct of his race was aroused by the injudicious interference of a fellow-countryman, and he went to the editor and struck him with his cane on the back. A scuffle ensued. The real offender, Kenrick, happened to be in an adjoining room, and separated

the combatants, and is believed to have written the following account of the encounter, which appeared in the 'London Packet':

'Mr. Evans most certainly fulfilled the title of the Doctor's Comedy, "He Stoops to Conquer"; for while the little spirited bookseller was stooping, the Doctor knocked him down; the honest Welshman sprang upon the Doctor and after mighty active strokes he conquered.

'The great Johnson, some years since, knocked down the blockhead of Gray's Inn, Tommy Osborne, and because he had done so, the great Goldy thought it necessary to knock down a bookseller too. Johnson triumphed and poor Goldy fell.

'I challenge the Doctor to produce a sensible man or woman that will say his piece has merit about it; and those who have read it agree, it is more contemptible in the perusal than in the acting.'

When Johnson knocked down the bookseller Osborne with one of his own folios, and was asked by Mrs. Thrale to describe the encounter, he answered, 'There is nothing to tell, dearest Lady, but that he was insolent, and I beat him. I have beat many a fellow, but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues.'

'What is the common price of an oak stick?' inquired Johnson, when he heard that Foote intended to produce him on the stage. 'Sixpence,' answered Davies. 'Why then, sir, give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. I'll have a double quality; for I am told Foote means to *take me off*, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity.'

Dr. Percy entered the following note in his memorandum about Goldsmith:

'Friday, March 26. I was at the Club. Dr. Goldsmith came to us with a bloody face fresh from his scuffle with Evans, the publisher of the "London Packet." Lord Charlemont read the Bristol Poetry.'

Among Dr. Percy's papers is one written in his own hand, describing Dr. Goldsmith's appearance at the Club after his affray with Evans the printer. A note is added, 'This account was intended for the press but was suppressed out of tenderness.'

'It is not easy to guess how the affray might have ended if Dr. Kenrick, a noted libeller, who was thought to be the author of the scurrilous letter, and who was all the while in the publisher's counting-house, had not interposed, and sent the Doctor, severely bruised, home in a coach.

'When he got to his Chambers, it happened that Mr. Beauclerk and Mr. Garrick called to carry him to the Club, and Mr. Beauclerk, who had all the sportive talents of his ancestor Charles II., and loved a little mischief, persuaded Dr. Goldsmith to go all bruised as he was to the Club, to show the world how little he was affected by his late encounter.

'The astonishment of the Company may be imagined when in the midst of some ingenious literary discussion the door opened and the bloody figure of the unfortunate bard entered, followed by his two conductors enjoying the surprise of their associates, and the stage effect of so uncommon a scene. The poor Doctor had every attention paid him which his painful situation required, but it was impossible for the most serious not to relax from his gravity at the oddity of the spectacle, and the comic circumstances of the narrative. However, from civility and tenderness, they long repressed their inclination to smile, till our unfortunate bard, who

remarked the constrained silence, and who was suffering great pain in body and mind, desired leave to retire, "as he found he only made the company melancholy." This unfortunate suggestion overcame their delicacy. To be grave any longer exceeded their power; the poor Doctor was no sooner withdrawn than a laugh burst forth which it was impossible to restrain.'

To a writer, appreciation sometimes comes from the most unexpected quarters. From St. Bride's Workhouse, next to Miles's Madhouse, Hoxton, near Shoreditch Church, Goldsmith received encouragement from a distressed fellow author named Joseph Lewis:

'Worthy Sir,—These with submission are to acquaint you that misfortune has reduced me and my family to the workhouse, of which I intend to give a description soon; it is all Tragi Comic from morning till night: Poverty has stuck so close to me all my life, that providence never trusted me with more than six guineas at one period of time, and the Lord knows that was several years agoe: if I had money I would purchase your New Comedy, for I believe it to be very entertaining, and do imagine it would furnish me with some hints to write a farce entitled "The Mistakes of a Day," for there is scarce a day passes but I make many, and see many made by others. I have got a galloping consumption in my pocket in this distressed Hotel, and have nothing to cheer my heart or raise a smile on the countenance of my wife and children. The bearer is my wife, Sarah, to whom I have been married upwards of two sieges of Troy, and have had 13 children by her.'

But Goldsmith received more serious encouragement from the other hemisphere. Dr. Cooper, president of King's College, New York, wrote on April 29, 1771:

'The "Deserted Village" was sent to me from England, but our booksellers refused to send for copies, as their customers in general were no great admirers of poetry. I therefore caused the poem to be reprinted at a moderate price, that the benevolent sensations described in it might influence as many people as possible, and your reputation be extended without injury to your property. Your quarto edition would not have sold in the colonies, where a strange spirit of economy has lately diffused itself. To judge from the tenour of your writings, *doing good* to your fellow-creatures is the end you have in view in your publications. I honour your goodness and admire the abilities wherewith God hath blessed you.'

On Friday, April 2, 1773, Sir William Jones, the Orientalist, was admitted to the Club.

During that week Percy went to see Milton's House in 'Petty France,' Westminster.

On Friday, April 16, Garrick produced Chatterton's letters at the Club, and on the following day Percy went with Dr. Goldsmith and Sir William Jones to inquire for the house where Chatterton died in 1770.

On Friday, April 23rd, Mr. Boswell was proposed, and on the 30th elected as a member of the Club.

On Friday, March 4, 1774, Percy met 3 new members at the Club, Sir Charles Bunbury, Dr. Fordyce, and George Steevens, who was chosen on that occasion.

On Thursday, March 10, Percy writes: 'Dr. Goldsmith called on me—we dined together at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street: *tête-à-tête*.'

'Monday, 28th March, I called on Dr. Goldsmith whom I found ill of a fever.

'Sunday, 3rd April, I saw poor Dr. Goldsmith, who was dangerously ill. He just knew me.

'Monday, 4th April, I went into Sussex. Poor Dr. Goldsmith died this day: having been in convulsions all night. On my return, on Saturday, 9th April, I saw poor Goldsmith's coffin; he was buried that day at 5 o'clock in the Temple Church.'

William Hawes, Goldsmith's apothecary, was obliged to publish an apology for this unfortunate occurrence, which he entitled 'An Account of the late Dr. Goldsmith's illness, so far as it relates to the exhibition of Dr. James's Powders: together with researches on the use and abuse of powerful medicines in the beginning of acute diseases.' It was dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds and Edmund Burke, and threw the blame on this famous remedy. 'A Vindication of the Powders' naturally followed, in which Goldsmith's servants testified that their master was convinced Mr. Hawes had supplied him with a counterfeit preparation of the powders, as their effects had been totally different from those he had always experienced from his favourite medicine. It was alleged that Hawes' officious publication did not get through an edition of 500, but it appears in any case to have acted as an advertisement, for James's powders rose in estimation, and the sale increased considerably.

Goldsmith himself advertised this patent remedy in his 'History of Little Goody Two-Shoes.' He wrote, 'Care and discontent shortened the days of little Margery's father. He was seized with a violent fever in a place where Dr. James's Powder was not to be had, and he died miserably.'

Goldsmith was not much of an orator; he once attempted to make a speech at a meeting of the Society of Arts, and was obliged to sit down in confusion. He had no settled notions upon any subject, and

always talked at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry when caught in an absurdity, but it did not prevent his falling into another the next minute.' When, according to his wont, he rattled away loosely upon all subjects, Johnson would shout out 'He knows nothing, he has made up his mind about nothing.'

When asked if by

> Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow

he meant tardiness in locomotion, without consideration Goldsmith answered 'Yes.' 'No, sir,' said Dr. Johnson, 'you mean that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude.' Goldsmith 'had been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another, and it did not settle in his mind, so that he could not tell what was in his own books.

Walpole declared he was 'an inspired idiot.' Garrick, taking off his increasingly abrupt and strange manner, wrote an epitaph on him for the amusement of the Club :

> Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
> He wrote like an angel and talk'd like poor Poll.

Though Goldsmith was not ready with a reply at the moment, he afterwards produced his poem 'Retaliation,' which was penned with great good nature, and *the* epitaph of Reynolds, which he was writing when he was attacked with his last illness, will immortalise Goldsmith's gratitude to that Great Master.

Dr. Percy, when in a good mind, was one of the most entertaining companions possible. Boswell said that he flowed with anecdotes like one of the brooks in the Isle of Skye. 'If so,' retorted Dr. Johnson,

'Dr. Birch is like the river Thames, for he excels Percy as much as Percy excels Goldsmith.' Dr. Birch, who enriched the British Museum with thousands of valuable documents, was admitted by Dr. Johnson to be a dull writer, 'for a pen was to him as a torpedo, the touch of which benumbed his hand and his brain,' but his lively memory made him 'as brisk as a bee in conversation' and enabled him to tell more anecdotes than any man.

Johnson's power in conversation was as unrivalled as in writing, but he laboured hard to excel and talked for victory. As a rule those writers who have produced great thoughts are of necessity dreamers, and, therefore, not as ready with their tongues as their more superficial neighbours. Johnson always boasted that he could argue equally well on either side of a question irrespective of his convictions. One day, when Percy found him rolling carelessly on the floor, surrounded with books, amid which was a curious Runic Bible, he told him of a friend who had just returned from a disagreeable and unsuccessful ride into the country, where he had arrived too late to accomplish what he had intended. 'Sir,' exclaimed Johnson, determined to show that in all things there is compensation, 'this man set out too late, got wet through, and lost his labour: but then,' he added triumphantly, 'I suppose he hired his horse cheaper.'

Not only were his arguments unanswerable, he had also that power of enforcing them of which Cowper says:

> Vociferated logic kills me quite,
> A noisy man is always in the right.

In this matter he met his match in Dr. Percy, for though he might 'down,' as Fanny Burney would say, Sir William Pepys, who was too well-bred to respond,

one of Percy's greatest distinctions—after his power of idealising Mrs. Percy—was his ability to bully Dr. Johnson.

It is an accepted maxim in nursery philosophy that those who cry get nothing. A truer, but less convenient, one for the authorities would be that those who cry the loudest get everything, though in so doing they make the world so unpleasant for themselves and all around them that they really lose all that is worth having.

One day a question was started as to whether people who disagreed might live peaceably together. Johnson said they might, by shunning the subject on which they differed. Goldsmith declared it was impossible, for unless they had the same tastes and aversions, they would find themselves in the position of Bluebeard's wife, *who might examine every chamber but one*, and that forbidden chamber would prove irresistible. Johnson shouted out, 'Sir, I am not saying that *you* could live in friendship with a man from whom you differ; I am only saying that *I* could do it.'

Had not Johnson proved his point by sheltering under his roof the most incongruous and unruly crew of pensioners, we should have imagined that it would have been far easier to live peaceably with Goldsmith, but it must be remembered that Johnson contrived to be often away from home.

Dr. Percy, unfortunately, was hot-tempered and quick to take offence. Returning to town late one afternoon, he wrote to David Garrick requesting an admission to his theatre that evening. Garrick made a rule never to receive letters in his dressing-room while preparing to appear on the stage, so his request

was disregarded. This caused a lasting quarrel, and reconciliation was found to be impossible. When Mr. Cradock offered to effect it, Percy answered, 'I have put it once into Mr. Garrick's power to oblige me, but as he has chosen to neglect it, I shall not give him a second opportunity.' Percy was, however, present at the first entertainment given by Mrs. Garrick at the Adelphi after her husband's death.

In his unhappy differences with Dr. Johnson, it must be allowed that Percy had cause of offence. By his ludicrous parody of a stanza in the 'Hermit of Warkworth,' it was said that Johnson only meant to attack the metre, but he certainly turned the whole poem into ridicule:

> I put my hat upon my head,
> And walked into the Strand,
> And there I met another Man
> With his hat in his hand.

Dr. Johnson afterwards complained, 'Notwithstanding all the pains that Dr. Farmer and I took to serve Percy, in regard to his Ancient Ballads, he has left town without taking leave of either of us.'

During his month of waiting as Chaplain to the King, Dr. Percy was able to invite his friends to dine at the Chaplain's table at St. James's, and there he collected some of the first literary characters of the age. He was much more liberal in his opinions than Dr. Johnson, and, among his miscellaneous celebrities, introduced Mr. Hume, who delighted the company with his conversation. Johnson would hardly have remained in the same room with him, but Boswell quieted his conscience by frankly telling Hume, 'I am not clear that it is right for me to keep company with you, but how much better are you than your books.'

Hume would himself declare, 'Though I throw out my speculations to entertain and employ the learned and metaphysical world, yet in other things I do not think as differently from the rest of mankind as you suppose.' Probably, after all, he felt much as Descartes did when he said that 'his religion was that of his nurse.'

But knowing how irritable Johnson's infirmities and misfortunes had made him, Percy's attempts to combat his narrow prejudices appeared to those who witnessed them to border on cruelty.

Percy was impetuous and sometimes tactless. One morning he said to Mr. Cradock, 'I have not seen Johnson for a long time. I must call upon him, and wish you would accompany me. I intend to tease him about Gibbon's pamphlet.' In vain Mr. Cradock implored him to desist. Percy opened the conversation with some anecdotes from Northumberland House, mentioned some rare books that were in the library, and then proceeded recklessly to 'throw out' the intelligence that the town rang with applause of Gibbon's most sarcastic reply to Davis; that the latter 'had written before he had read,' and that the two 'Confederate Doctors,' as Mr. Gibbon termed them, 'had fallen into some strange errors.'

Johnson said he knew nothing of Davis's pamphlet, nor would he give any answer as to Gibbon; but, if the 'Confederate Doctors,' as they were termed, had really made such mistakes, they were blockheads. Percy seemed bent on venturing into the lion's mouth. He talked on in the most careless style possible, but in a very lofty tone, and Johnson appeared to be exceedingly angry. Cradock only wished to get released, for he dreaded every moment that Percy would proceed to inform Johnson that he had lately introduced Mr. Hume

to dine at the Chaplain's table, then an explosion would have been inevitable.

In 1768 Boswell assembled Johnson, Percy, Dr. Douglas (Bishop of Salisbury), and Langton, to meet those eminent Scotch literati, Dr. Robertson the historian, and Dr. Hugh Blair, who were, however, afraid to open their lips for fear of exposing themselves to the 'sword of Goliath.' Johnson was that evening in remarkable vigour of mind, and 'tossed and gored several persons,' including Dr. Percy, who left the company. Johnson took no notice at the time, but feeling some compunction after the first ebullition was over, of having spoken too hardly to his friend Dr. Percy, he turned on the man who had occasioned it by suddenly dragging him into ludicrous notice in presence of the Scottish doctors, before whom it was his ambition to appear to advantage. 'Every great man,' he declared pointedly, 'has some officious follower who insidiously stimulates his resentment.' Nor did the mischief-maker's punishment rest there, for he was never afterwards allowed to assume 'a strutting importance' without being reminded of this 'grievous' but well-deserved 'mortification.'

On Sunday, April 12, 1778, Dr. Johnson, accompanied by Boswell and Mrs. Williams, went to dine with Dr. Percy, on which occasion their memorable quarrel took place. Johnson, who always allowed that he had been unable to subdue his envious disposition, accused Goldsmith of the same failing. Boswell defended him by saying that he owned it frankly on all occasions. 'Sir,' exclaimed Dr. Johnson, 'you are enforcing the charge. Goldsmith has so much envy that he cannot conceal it. He is so full of it that he overflows. Now, sir, what a man avows he is not

ashamed to think, though many a man thinks what he is ashamed to avow. We are all envious, naturally, but by checking envy we get the better of it.'

This outburst foreshadowed the coming storm. Boswell would willingly have suppressed the scene between Percy and Johnson that followed, had he not seen in it an opportunity of displaying 'the benevolent heart of Dr. Johnson' and his desire to make reparation to the friend whose feelings he had hurt.

Dr. Johnson, as was his wont, praised Pennant's books of travel very highly; but Dr. Percy, believing himself to be the heir male of the ancient Percies, and having the warmest attachment to the House of Northumberland, could not sit quietly and hear a man praised who had written disrespectfully of Alnwick Castle and the Duke's pleasure-grounds, which he described as trim, and more adapted to a suburban villa than the ancient seat of a great Baron, and said that nothing reminded the visitor of its former circumstances but the crowd of *un*industrious poor that swarmed at the gate.

Johnson possessed a delicate perception of the theory of 'fictitious benevolence' usually called politeness, but owing to his uncontrolled temper he often failed in the outward form, if not in the spirit, and this failure invariably produced disagreeable results. On this occasion he and his host forgot that good breeding forbids a man to be rude under his own roof or any other where he is a guest.

Johnson held that it should be a man's study 'to repress all signs of emotion, and said that a noise equal to the Indian war-cry could be procured by a proper mixture of asses, bulls, turkeys, geese and *tragedians*.'

'But would you not start, sir,' inquired Boswell,

'if you saw a ghost?' 'I hope not,' he answered; 'if I did I should frighten the ghost!'

Certainly, if ghosts retain only their mortal nerves, Johnson's signs of emotion would have made them ump.

But to return to the controversy.

Johnson: 'Pennant, in what he has said of Alnwick, has done what he intended; he has made you very angry.'

Percy: 'He has said the garden is *trim*, which is representing it like a citizen's parterre, when the truth is there is a very large extent of fine turf and gravel walks.'

Johnson: 'According to your own account, sir, Pennant is right. It *is* trim. Here is grass cut close, and gravel rolled smooth. Is not that trim? The extent is nothing against that; a mile may be as trim as a square yard. Your extent puts me in mind of the citizen's enlarged dinner, two pieces of roast beef and two puddings. There is no variety, no mind exerted in laying out the grounds, no trees.'

The mention of 'no trees' was a further offence to Percy, who had greatly helped the Duke with his plantations.

Percy: 'He pretends to give the natural history of Northumberland, and yet takes no notice of the immense number of trees planted there of late.'

Johnson: 'That, sir, has nothing to do with the *natural* history; that is *civil* history. A man who gives the natural history of the oak is not to tell how many oaks have been planted in this place or that.'

Percy: 'Pennant does not describe well.'

Johnson: 'I think he describes very well.'

Percy: 'I travelled after him.'

Johnson: 'And *I* travelled after him.'

Percy: 'But, my good friend, you are short-sighted, and do not see so well as I do.'

Boswell wondered at Percy venturing on this allusion to Johnson's short sight, a defect the mention of which always infuriated him. 'I will not be known to posterity by my defects,' he roared, when Reynolds painted him looking into the slit of his pen and holding it close to his eye; though it was urged that Sir Joshua himself was represented with his ear-trumpet, he rejoined 'He may paint himself as deaf as he chooses, but I will not be blinking Sam.'

The calm that precedes a storm followed on this gratuitous insult. Johnson said nothing, but Boswell knew that inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst.

Not only was Percy's temper hot, but he also had that irritating manner of constantly recurring to disagreeable subjects—that spirit of nagging that is usually ascribed to women. After a little while he said something more in disparagement of Pennant.

Johnson (*pointedly*): 'This is the resentment of a narrow mind, because Pennant did not find everything in Northumberland.'

Percy (*feeling the stroke*): 'Sir, you may be as rude as you please.'

Johnson: 'Hold, sir! Don't talk of rudeness; remember, sir, you told me' (*puffing hard with passion struggling for a vent*) 'I was short-sighted. We have done with civility. We are to be as rude as we please.'

Percy: 'Upon my honour, sir, I did not mean to be uncivil.'

Johnson: 'I cannot say so, sir, for I *did* mean to be uncivil, thinking *you* had been uncivil.'

Dr. Percy rose, ran up to him, and, taking him by the hand, assured him affectionately that his meaning had been misunderstood ; upon which a reconciliation instantly took place, and Johnson said 'My dear sir, I am willing you should *hang* Pennant.' However, even after this generous permission to hang the offending object of their quarrel, nothing would deter Percy from again recurring to the subject; 'Pennant,' he says, 'complains that the helmet is not hung out to invite to the hall of hospitality,' in accordance with the custom of the ancient Norman Barons, who placed on the highest point of their fortresses a helmet as a sign that all men and women of gentle birth should boldly enter into their castles and use them as their own. 'Now,' continued the irrepressible Percy, 'I never heard that it was a custom to hang out a helmet.'

'Hang him up, hang him up!' shouted Johnson, weary of his persistence and determined to treat it as a joke.

In this he was aided by Boswell, who cried, 'Hang out his skull instead of a helmet, and you may drink ale out of it in your hall of Odin as he is your enemy ; that will be truly ancient. *There* will be *Northern Antiquities.*'

Johnson, though he now preserved his temper, still managed to have the last word. Admitting his political differences with Pennant, he said 'He's a Whig, sir ; a *sad dog* ' ; but with a triumphant smile he concluded, 'but he's the best traveller I ever read ; he observes more things than anyone else.'

There was a calm after the storm ; the guests stayed the evening and were pleasant and gay. But Dr. Percy told Boswell that he was very uneasy at what had passed ; for there was a gentleman present, to whom

he had hoped to appear more respectable by showing how intimate he was with Dr. Johnson. He begged Boswell to mention this to Dr. Johnson.

When he did so Johnson answered, 'This comes of stratagem; had Percy told me that he wished to appear to advantage before that gentleman, he should have been at the top of the house all the time.'

Boswell, being himself an expert in stratagem, undertook to write a letter to Johnson, which would draw from him a letter placing Percy's merits in the best possible light. This was subsequently to be shown to Lord Percy as a proof of Dr. Johnson's kind disposition towards one in whom his Lordship was interested. Thus, exclaimed Boswell triumphantly, every unfavourable impression will be obviated. Well might Dr. Percy have prayed to be delivered from friends, who, by their meddling, are often more powerful in mischief-making than enemies.

Though all this plot was hatched without Dr. Percy's knowledge, like all busybodies, Boswell could not allow it to remain so. He therefore hastened to inform Dr. Percy of his kind offices, and of the happy termination of his scheme, for which, strange to say, he received Percy's warmest thanks. To lose no time, he called on him while he was at breakfast, and also wrote as follows to explain the matter, should he be away from home:

'I wrote to Dr. Johnson, and have received an answer which will delight you. I read it yesterday to Dr. Robertson, Lord Percy, General Oglethorpe, and General Paoli, who desires the favour of your company next Tuesday to dinner to meet Dr. Johnson.'

The following is an extract from Dr. Johnson's letter:

'The debate between Dr. Percy and me is one of those foolish controversies which begin upon a question of which neither party cares how it is decided, and which is, nevertheless, continued to acrimony by the vanity with which every man resists confutation. Dr. Percy's warmth proceeded from a cause which does him honour . . . his opinion that Pennant had censured his patron. . . . If Dr. Percy is really offended, I am sorry; for he is a man whom I never knew to offend anyone. He is a man very willing to learn, and very able to teach; a man out of whose company I never go without having learned something. It is sure he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance.'

Percy said, 'I would rather have this letter than degrees from all the universities. It will be for me and my children and my grandchildren.'

But Dr. Johnson, with his straightforward, honest nature, was much offended when he heard of the plot, and desired Boswell to get the letter back.

When Grainger's poem 'The Sugar Cane' was read in manuscript at Sir Joshua Reynolds', the assembled wits burst into a laugh at a new paragraph beginning

Now, Muse, let's sing of rats,

which increased when one of them perceived that the word had originally been *mice*, and had been altered to *rats* as more dignified. Dr. Percy supported his friend Grainger by maintaining that originally, in his description of the havoc made by rats and mice, the author had introduced the subject in a kind of mock heroic, as a parody of Homer's 'Battle of the Frogs and Mice.' Subsequently, unknown to Percy, he had been persuaded against his better judgment to alter it, and had thus produced the line that diverted the wits.

In his printed work, however, the whole passage was altered, and the offending rats were merely mentioned as 'whisker'd vermin.' Johnson objected to the title of 'Sugar Cane,' and said one might as well write of a 'Parsley-bed' or 'Cabbage Garden.'

He declared that Dr. Percy was angry with him for laughing at his friend's 'Sugar Cane,' for he 'had a mind to make a great thing of Grainger's rats.' When told that Percy was writing a 'History of the Wolf in Great Britain,' he exclaimed:

'The wolf, sir! Why the wolf? Why does he not write of the bear or the beaver, or of the grey rat, the Hanover rat, as it is called, because it is said to have come into this country about the time that the family of Hanover came? I should like to see "The History of the Grey Rat, by Dr. Thomas Percy, D.D., Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty."'

'I am afraid,' suggested Boswell, when Johnson's immoderate laughter had subsided, 'a Court Chaplain could not decently write of the Grey Rat.'

'Sir,' returned Johnson, 'he need not give it the name of the Hanover Rat.'

On his return from Northumberland, Dr. Percy found himself on one occasion immediately obliged to preach a charity sermon which he had forgotten to write. Though much fatigued with the journey, he resolved to sit up late to make extracts from former discourses, but suddenly recollecting that Johnson's fourth 'Idler' exactly expressed his meaning, he freely engrafted the greater part of it into his sermon. His discourse was so highly approved that he was requested to print it, which honour he strenuously opposed till he was assured by the Governors of the Charity that it was absolutely necessary, as the annual contributions

depended upon its appearing in their report. In this dilemma he earnestly requested Mr. Cradock to call upon Dr. Johnson to explain matters. He assented, and endeavoured to introduce the subject with all due solemnity. Dr. Johnson was greatly amused, and laughing heartily said—not perhaps without a feeling of triumph—'Pray, sir, give my kind respects to Dr. Percy, and tell him I desire he will do whatever he pleases in regard to my "Idler"; it is entirely at his service.'

In spite of all their difference Johnson and Percy really appreciated each other highly. Percy declared that Dr. Johnson's conversation was strong and clear like an antique statue, where every vein and muscle is distinct and bold, while ordinary conversation resembled an inferior cast. He allowed that he was not altogether free from prejudices, and would sometimes deliver his sentiments with unguarded asperity; but no man was actuated by stronger benevolence, or would make greater exertions to serve the distressed. He was a superior character, not only in talents, but in religion and virtue.

Dr. Johnson, on the other hand, declared that, though Percy 'ran about with very little weight upon his mind,' 'all that he might say of him in sport or petulance was very consistent with a full conviction of his merit.' In the whole circle of his acquaintance he had 'scarcely found such a large mind, and at the same time such a minute accuracy of enquiry as Dr. Percy's. Percy's attention to poetry gave great splendour to his studies of antiquity.'

CHAPTER IX

1778–1783

It was in 1778, the year of Dr. Percy's memorable quarrel with Johnson, that his long-expected promotion came to him. In the autumn of that year he was appointed to the Deanery of Carlisle. 'Unfashionable as he feared such sentiments would appear to the giddy world,' Percy confided to his cousin the hope that 'he might so occupy the position to which he had been advanced in God's Church that he might not be found amongst the unprofitable servants.'

On hearing of his appointment Dr. Johnson in a more worldly spirit wrote: 'Dr. Percy is now Dean of Carlisle; about £500 a year, with a power of presenting himself to some good living. He is provided for.' He added, 'If Dean Percy can be popular at Carlisle he may be very happy. He has in his disposal two good livings, each almost equal in value to the Deanery; he may take one himself, and give the other to his son.'

Boswell, on the other hand, found it 'divinely cheering to think there was a Cathedral so near Auchinleck, the romantic home of his ancestors.' To this Johnson replied sarcastically, 'How near is the Cathedral to Auchinleck, that you are so much delighted with it? It is, I suppose, at least a hundred and fifty miles off. However, if you are pleased, it is so far well.'

The distance was in reality only half of that represented by Dr. Johnson; but when Boswell visited Carlisle

the following year, on November 7, he found that Dr. and Mrs. Percy had already paid a visit of inspection and 'had been gone from thence for some months.' He was informed at the Inn that the Dean had made a very favourable impression. During the four years that Percy occupied the post he continued also to hold his Northamptonshire benefices, and though he did not remove to Carlisle till 1780, he was able, by means of flying visits, occasionally to attend to his duties.

Those who would trace his footsteps at Carlisle must be prepared for failure and disappointment. When the tram-car which conveys them from the station leaves them at the porter's lodge on a late autumn afternoon, the bell is answered with polite surprise that a stranger should wish to visit the Deanery at that hour; but fortified by the consciousness of a courteous permission from the Dean to inspect the home of Dr. Percy, the stranger enters the precincts of the Abbey Close, where the purer air breathes a spirit of dignity and aloofness from the turmoil of the busy street without. The Deanery, which has been greatly enlarged in later years, appears in the fast-failing light to be an imposing structure, and, on entering, the brightness of the electric lights and the surroundings of modern comfort form a striking contrast to the older part of the building that in the time of Dr. Percy contained no passages. Though he made some additions, it then consisted mainly of a very old square embattled tower, which in bygone centuries had been fortified and used by the Canons as a place of retreat, for in times of Border warfare these dignitaries led a stormy and precarious life. In 1315 they made a gallant defence against the Scots under Robert Bruce, and in 1645 had to withstand a siege of nine months at the hands of the

Parliamentary army, who only reduced the place by starvation, though it was encumbered with 'theives and manie other inconveniences.' A century later, in 1745, two of the most vigilant clergy, armed with 'a very large spying glass,' were posted upon the high tower of the Cathedral, and when the rebels who followed Prince Charlie came before Carlisle, they took arms and served as aides-de-camp to the Governor.

Percy found the Deanery full of antiquarian interest. In the tower was a large square room that formed the Prior's dining-hall, with a beautiful oak ceiling, erected by Prior Senhouse early in the sixteenth century, painted with various devices and legends, and, what must have appealed to him strongly, oak beams adorned with the 'three luces' of the Percys. In this apartment are ancient doorways, that once led by a covered passage over the cloister to the Cathedral. The walls are of enormous thickness, and by a winding stone staircase another room in the tower is reached. From the large, low-ceilinged study, where Percy passed a dignified leisure in contributing notes to Nichols's 'Collection of Miscellaneous Poems,' the voice of his successor might now be heard instructing a class of young lads. Though kindly conducted over the house, where Dr. Percy welcomed Fanny Burney and other literary friends, it was impossible not to recognise a slight feeling of surprise at the curiosity of a stranger concerning an unknown predecessor, and it soon became apparent that the place of the man who 'redeemed English poetry,' and inspired Sir Walter Scott, now knows him no more.

With returning day and renewed hope, the inquirer next visited the Cathedral before the morning service, and was welcomed by a shrewd north-country verger,

who, though equally uninformed respecting the personage in question, listened with sympathetic interest, and was ready to tell or hear of all matters relating to the venerable building committed to his keeping. To facilitate further inquiries, he reminded the visitor that locally the name of *Bishop* Percy is not connected, as in the world of letters, with our Right Reverend Poet, but with a Prelate of the House of Northumberland who died in the middle of the nineteenth century, and they who would inquire concerning the editor of the 'Reliques' must, within those precincts, speak of him as *Dean* Percy. He pointed aloft to windows of stained glass adorned with the Percy arms, and so placed as to throw a softened light on the head of the preacher. An arrangement so entirely in accordance with the spirit of Dean Percy, who loved to be surrounded and shadowed by the Lion of Northumberland, at once suggested his work, but the guide corrected these hasty surmises by the information that it dated only from the nineteenth century, and was probably carried out by his namesake.

But Dean Percy left his mark in the Abbey by removing the whitewash of Reformation days from the backs of two of the stalls, and thus bringing to light two curious old paintings of the time of Prior Gondibour in the fifteenth century—one representing the legend of St. Augustine, and the other that of St. Anthony.

Yet one more source of information was suggested to the persistent inquirer. Within the precincts dwelt an antiquary to whose door the guide offered to conduct the stranger, provided the timid Southerner had courage to face 'a very forbidding gentleman,' whose austere manner concealed a very kindly nature. With words of encouragement, and a polite but firm

refusal to accept any more substantial reward than the most hearty thanks, he accordingly left her on the dread threshold. But anticipation only tends to unnerve the faint-hearted, and it is ignorance that gives courage to the fool. The intruder, though suspected of 'being one of those ladies who monopolise the most convenient seats in the reading-room of the British Museum,' was nevertheless most kindly conducted to the Chapter House, now used as a library. Even there the memory of Dean Percy does not appear to be preserved, although he probably assisted in its formation, for on his arrival he found, 'amongst the society of Carlisle, some ingenious, scholar-like men, and in order to increase the number, it was proposed to rebuild an old library, and to set apart an annual sum out of the public revenue to purchase a constant supply of the best books.'

Among the group of literary men that Dr. Percy managed to draw around him was Paley, the author of the 'Evidences of Christianity,' who was one of the canons, and Archdeacon Law—afterwards Bishop of Elphin—who, according to Boswell, 'possessed a great variety of knowledge, uncommon genius, and sincere religion.' Another ecclesiastic, Dr. Hudson, was so fond of preaching that when he got up into the pulpit he 'never knew when to give over,' and one day he stayed so long that, at length overcome by his exertions, he fell down, and 'ever after his friends prevailed upon him to be quiet.'

The records of the Chapter show many orders signed in the familiar hand of Thomas Percy. During his period of office the fratery was new roofed, and the Cathedral pump repaired. By his direction every chorister whose behaviour warranted the distinction

was presented, on leaving the choir, with a Bible and Prayer Book and a copy of the 'Whole Duty of Man.'

In quest of rare editions of old works, Dr. Percy was in the habit of rummaging every available bookstall, and he consequently realised more fully than many other divines the harm done by the objectionable publications and prints that were exhibited in the cheapest forms in every bookseller's stall or window, 'to the universal corruption of the rising generation.' He called the attention of Dr. Porteus, Bishop of London, to this evil. The success that had attended that prelate's exertions to revive the religious observance of Good Friday caused Percy 'not to despair' of any cause that he might deem worthy of the power of his pen.

'Our remote bookseller at Carlisle,' wrote Percy, 'received a cargo of corrupt prints and volumes, which he took to pieces, in order to accommodate more expeditiously all his circulating customers. I thought it my duty to interpose, and partly by remonstrance, and partly by threatening to put in execution laws which did not, but ought to, exist, I got all books of that sort removed out of his shop. Would to God something of this kind could be effected at the fountain-head!'

Though we cannot find much trace of Percy's life at Carlisle we may follow his wanderings in the surrounding country, and travelling slowly on the North British Railway from Carlisle across the Cheviots to the other side of the Border, we may survey the scenes of many of his wanderings. Longtown, situated just within the county of Cumberland, and only four or five miles from Scotland, was one stage from Carlisle, and Percy described it as in all respects the poorest and most shabby town he had ever seen in either country. On market days it was full of prosperous-looking farmers

and smart country lasses; but, though the common people looked clean and comely, their dwellings were a miserable assemblage of wretched clay huts. Being the last town on the English side of the Border, it proved a handy halting-place for a great number of runaway couples bound for Gretna Green, among whom Percy noticed a pair of old people who had eloped from their children and grandchildren. But, in addition to the fury of parents or children, these romantic fugitives had other perils to encounter on the last stage of their journey, for between Longtown and Gretna Green, on Solway Moss, where there was no shelter from house or tree, they were liable to be overtaken by violent storms that rocked them in their chaises, and sometimes blew them, horses and all, off the road. But, once safely arrived at their destination, they were united by 'a low mechanic,' who in Percy's time was also, in the literal sense, by trade a joiner. This officiating minister, disguised in the habit of a clergyman, shared his perquisites with the postboys, who, by their speed and agility, supplied him with customers.

In complete contrast to 'these unthinking fools,' as Percy calls the runaways, we find among his papers an advertisement that has been preserved, whether for future use or from a love of collecting curious documents, it is impossible to say, setting forth to practical and cautious folk the advantages of a registry office at 2 Dover Street, which declares itself to be 'solely calculated for such persons as are totally at their own disposal!' The prospectus shows at great length 'the utility of an establishment which undertakes to carry on courtships by proxy to their final issue, on behalf of gentlemen absorbed in the business of Court or City,

who have neither time nor temper for the tedious forms of wooing.' This institution also enables 'many excellent women to gain a husband, . . . for, though true modesty does not demand the sacrifice of sense, yet are they tied down by custom to be passive, and cannot be the first movers in a point so delicate.' The advertisement concludes, 'It would be superfluous to trouble the public about the character of the proprietors, some of whom are well known in the city, and others are not strangers to polite circles. . . . So much time and thought cannot be laid out on a plan which bids fair to be for the happiness of thousands without a reasonable recompense, and though no more than five guineas is to be paid on taking down the Minutes of the business, yet it is presumed that so small a sum will not be deemed adequate when business of consequence is to be done, and persons of condition are concerned.'

Longtown had one tolerable Inn, where on market day Percy dined at a very good 'ordinary,' the fare comprising 'excellent fish, roasted mutton, and apple pye,' for the sum of eightpence, but when 'persons of condition' came that way they were treated with great distinction. Sir Walter Scott witnessed the reception of one of the survivors of Percy's generation, and delighted in recounting this last relic of an ancient style that had passed away. He met 'a cavalcade between Carlisle and Longtown consisting of Lord Abercorn on horseback, wearing the Order of the Garter, following the ladies of the family and household, who occupied four or five carriages. At Longtown Lord Abercorn's major-domo and cook had arranged for the reception of the party in the little public-house as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansion. The

ducks and geese fresh from the village pond were disguised as entrées, every huckaback towel in the place had to do duty as a napkin, and remnants of crockery and pewter had been furbished up and figured on the crazy old buffet which represented a sideboard.'

Percy tells us that the smaller gentry of Cumberland and Northumberland frequented a place called Gilsland Spa, which was a humble imitation of Buxton and Matlock, and the waters being chiefly sulphurous much resembled those of Harrogate. Two miles distant the ancient Roman Wall could be seen at Glen-welt. It was at Gilsland Spa that Sir Walter Scott first saw his future wife. His heart was but 'handsomely pieced' on the day that he was united in Carlisle Cathedral to one who, unlike the homely Mrs. Percy, seemed to count for very little in her husband's life. In all those hours of loneliness, weariness and toil, of which his journal tells us, there is no feeling of her presence, and he was content if, from his study, he heard distant sounds of merry voices that showed his family to be unmindful of his sufferings. But his wife's foibles served sometimes to divert his mind, and she failed more in tact than in intention, for she would often break in on his solitude 'half a score of times to see if the fire burned, and to ask a hundred kind questions.' 'Lady S.,' he wrote, 'knows not what I suffer.'

In contrast to the manner in which Dean Percy has been forgotten at Carlisle, it is good to see the veneration in which the memory of Sir Walter Scott is held across the Border, and fortunate are those who (under the guidance of the kindest of hostesses, and in the company of one to whose researches we owe the 'Life of Descartes') can visit Abbotsford on one of

those cloudless autumn days, the glory of which far exceeds anything that the poets have dreamed of in Spring. Here, amid all the beauties of the surrounding country, we find a home where every inanimate object speaks of the absent master and of the one weakness of a great genius—that striving after a position of immeasurably less permanent value than his own. As a laird his name would now have merely figured on a genealogical tree; as a man of letters his spirit abides in our midst as a living force. But it was ever the followers that desired an 'earthly kingdom,' and Sir Walter Scott himself would have been completely happy, 'in spite of his misfortunes,' could he have seen those about him as indifferent as he was to the loss of consideration that they entailed. 'Nevertheless,' writes one who in this present day fills both positions, in Scott's own country, 'it remains an honour and a pleasant thought to the class of the country gentry, that to join their ranks should have been the aim and object set before him by so great a man.'

During the summer of 1781, according to a paragraph in the 'Public Advertiser,' the Dean spent a 'good while at Alnwick rummaging the archives for materials to carry on the "History of the House of Percy."' In the meanwhile his family removed to Carlisle, whence he received a letter announcing their safe arrival, dated August 17.

Though the 'Public Advertiser' of October 6, 1781, declared that the failure of Percy's efforts to secure promotion indicated 'that the Northumberland interest was far gone in a decline,' no sooner had he established himself and his family at Carlisle than an opportunity occurred of exchanging his English Deanery for an Irish Bishopric. Lord Carlisle, who was at that time

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had offered his old tutor, Dr. Ekins, the charge of a vacant diocese in that country, but he preferred a lesser position in his native land; so an arrangement was made whereby Percy was to resign all his English preferments on the condition of being given an Irish bishopric. On this event Mrs. Percy wrote in a spirit worthy of Mrs. Proudie to announce to William Cleveland 'the Bishop of Dromore's' safe arrival in Dublin. She adds:

'My Bishop tells me he is very well, and writes me word how exceeding kind and hospitable the people of Ireland are. Numbers of the first fashion have been to pay their respects to your Cousin as well as Bishop. I understand he has not dined at home but four times since he went.'

Dr. Percy made an agreeable tour through Ireland in order to hold a visitation at Dromore, and after inspecting half his churches, returned to England, as his episcopal house, being newly built, was not yet dry enough to inhabit.

Meanwhile he was not unmindful of his literary friends on the other side of the water. From Dublin he sent a hogshead of claret as a tribute of respect to the members of the club in Gerrard Street, where he had spent so many agreeable hours. Not hearing of its arrival, he wrote in some anxiety to Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Joseph Banks. It was found, on inquiry, to have been transferred to Sir Joseph's private cellars to be matured, but he was assured that when it was tapped the negligence of the club in acknowledging the gift would be washed away by the first bottle.

It was during this year of prosperity that the Bishop and his wife had to face the heaviest sorrow of their lives, the fatal illness of their only son Henry, on whom

all their hopes were fixed. All Mrs. Percy's tact had been required to keep the peace between her husband and son, for Dr. Percy was impetuous and exacting, and, being a brilliant scholar himself, was never entirely satisfied with his son's achievements. On one occasion, after some disagreement, the boy, to their great consternation, was missing for some days. He was eventually sent to Emmanuel College, and Percy blamed Dr. Farmer and those in authority for causing his son's illness by placing him in a damp room. In the contention that followed the authorities were supported by Dr. Johnson.

In 1782 Percy wrote from Carlisle, where he appears to have resided more constantly for some time after he had been promoted to the bishopric of Dromore than he had ever done as Dean of that city.

'On November 7 my son Henry embarked for Italy at Liverpool on board a Tuscan brig, carrying Imperial colours. The origin of his illness was a severe cold caught last winter at Cambridge, which being neglected, degenerated into consumption, and he was judged to have no other chance of life, but an immediate removal by sea to a southern climate. After trying all the northern sea ports, I met with the above ship at Liverpool, and there he set sail, Heaven knows with what chance of surviving at this inclement season. A young clergyman goes with him to assist him in his studies. He arrived safely at Leghorn on December 17 after a stormy voyage of 41 days, having by the mercy of God escaped great dangers. In passing the straits of Gibraltar, which they ran in the dark, they saw the red-hot balls firing at the garrison, and were even fired at by a Spanish gunboat, but happily escaped under shelter of night; a neutral ship that sailed with them

was captured by the enemy, for they spare none that have English property on board. In the Mediterranean they ran fresh dangers from the Algerines, who had 28 ships out cruising on all that carried Imperial Colours, who would have made slaves of them if they had fallen in their way.'

On April 4, 1783, he added:

'My poor son is still alive, but so declined in health that we have no hopes of his recovery. He has removed to Marseilles in France and was confined to his bed, from whence we fear he will arise no more.

'We recommend him to your prayers.

'May we learn resignation to the Will of the Almighty!'

In his next letter he added:

'The last post brought us the fatal news of the death of my poor son, who died at Marseilles on the second of this month. I endeavour to say, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." I believe no one died a better Christian.'

Bishop Percy had always hoped that his son would make a brilliant entrance into the literary world by editing a fresh collection of old English Poetry, and to that end he had continued to add to his store of old ballads. He now transferred all hope of having his name perpetuated in literary circles, to his nephew and namesake 'Thomas Percy,' the only son of his brother Anthony. At the age of eight this little prodigy had addressed some verses to Sir Ashton Lever, which appeared in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for December 1778; but Bishop Percy declared it was hardly equal to a pastoral that had been composed by the young author in one day amid many interruptions, which

hasty production had appeared in the April number of the same publication. This child bid fair to compensate for the constant worry Percy had, through life, suffered on account of his brother Anthony, to whose interest, he declared, he had ever been as keenly attentive as to his own.

The year following the Bishop's appointment to the See of Dromore, Anthony Percy became bankrupt and involved his brother, who had been security for him, in great losses, in addition to the burden of maintaining his family.

In fact Thomas Percy declared he had never known the want of money until his great preferment. Of the heavy burdens entailed on high ecclesiastical appointments the laity know little. The moment he entered his bishopric, he became a debtor to his predecessor for the sum of £3200 for the building of the new episcopal residence at Dromore, though it was still unfinished. £1200 had to be paid by the end of the year, as well as £200 for the patent, whilst the Bishop had as yet received only £900 from his official income. Though he had obtained the promotion that was the desire of his heart, he found that 'under a mitre there may be heavy cares and grievous disappointments.'

In June 1783 Bishop Percy was assured that the new Palace at Dromore would soon be dry enough to accommodate himself and his family. With due regard to the prosperity of his future country, he employed a Dublin cabinet-maker, in preference to the best that London could produce, though goods might easily be despatched from England direct to Belfast. But this patriotic spirit met with a poor reward, for his chairs and ottomans arrived much damaged in consequence of careless packing in wet straw, and the

tassels for the bells came without ropes. Bishop Percy readily accommodated himself to the business habits of his new countrymen, for in payment of a bill of £100 he sent his upholsterer a remittance of £66, which was gratefully received with many apologies. But his indignation was aroused when Mrs. Percy's dressing-table, which he had ordered to be furnished with 'bottles to contain sweet waters,' arrived with only two 'shabby tumblers' that were 'in no way proper.' Marie Antoinette lost her head because she refused to travel without her new dressing-case, and the Bishop's remonstrances and threats to 'warn the nobility and gentry of his acquaintance' show he was alive to the importance of what the French so aptly term *le nécessaire*. The obsequious spirit in which all his protests were met proves them to have been well founded. But in spite of all these inconveniences Bishop Percy hoped that, on the whole, he and his family would pass their time very agreeably in the new home.

CHAPTER X

1783-1798

The See of Dromore, in County Down, to which Thomas Percy was preferred, was of respectable antiquity, having been founded in 500 by St. Colman. Its revenue exceeded that of many English bishoprics, though it was situated in the poorest district and was the smallest independent diocese in Ireland. It contained only twenty-six parishes, but they were the best livings in the kingdom.

In 1635 the church at Dromore was in ruins, and the Bishop's dwelling, a little timber house 'of no great state,' was surrounded with thatched huts or removable creaghts, framed with strong wattles, covered with mud and rushes.

James I. granted by letters patent a free market to be held in the town of Dromore every Saturday, near the church, where stood a great stone cross, erected by St. Colman, to mark the holy well or fountain that had survived from the days of the Druids. After the introduction of Christianity, the converts were baptized in its waters at the foot of the cross, which in Reformation times was pulled down, only the foundation stones being left standing. Bishop Percy wished to remove them to his own Episcopal demesne and to erect the cross once more beside a well in his own grounds, known as St. Colman's. But, finding the proposition unpopular, he gave up his project, and the

village stocks were erected on the base. A poem on this subject appeared in the 'Belfast News Letter':

> Fancy, in her distemper'd views of things,
> Sees Kings turn'd Beggars, Beggars into Kings—
> The stately palace dwindle to a cottage,
> And for a banquet, served a mess of pottage.
> But Fancy, in her strangest, wild vagaries,
> Her dreams of witches, goblins, ghosts and fairies,
> Visions of present, or of future evils,
> Assassins, Robbers, French Invaders, Devils,
> Never conceiv'd what seems a paradox,
> The Cross *degraded* to *display* the Stocks!

Charles II. appointed Jeremy Taylor, the author of 'Holy Living' and 'Holy Dying,' to the See of Dromore, which he held in conjunction with those of Connor and Down. This celebrated theologian built the present church at his own expense on the site of the old one. Though it has served as a cathedral, it is in reality no larger than an ordinary parish church. In this building Jeremy Taylor and his wife found their last resting-place, and in the same vault were placed the remains of three other Bishops, George Rust, Essex Digby, and Capel Wiseman, the great-uncle of Cardinal Wiseman.

In 1688 the town was the scene of a skirmish known as the rout of Dromore. As a reward for his gallant and skilful conduct during the siege of Derry, William III. appointed Walker, Governor of Londonderry, who had previously been rector of Donoughmore, to the Bishopric of Dromore. But he lost his life in the service of his Dutch master. When his death was announced to the King, His Majesty said coldly 'Well! what business had he to be there?'

This instance of the ingratitude of William of Orange, whose pious and immortal memory still serves

to quicken religious and political strife, was resented by Bishop Percy, who maintained that his predecessor's military genius justified his action.

The valour and fidelity of William's followers at the siege of Derry was the subject of competitive poems written by the local poets of Dromore, whose talents were discovered and stimulated by Dr. Percy. The prize was gained by Thomas Stott, a bleacher, who attained to wider fame by poems that he contributed to the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' under the name of 'Hafiz.' He wrote:

> Invidious James himself it too admir'd,
> When vex'd, he from the fruitless siege retir'd,
> Exclaiming, with chagrin, before his host—
> 'Could I of such intrepid soldiers boast,
> Those cursed walls, that still my hopes confound,
> Had long ere this been levell'd with the ground.'
> . . . . . .

For this poem pre-eminence was claimed.

> Ye petty Bards, in vain your competition
> To vie with this *distinguish'd composition*;
> . . . . . .
> At his command, each epithet came hopping
> Quick as the globules from the house-eave dropping!
> . . . . . .
> No wonder then, I say it is no wonder,
> Ye petty Bards, that you must all knock under.

In the satirical poem, 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,' by which Lord Byron avenged himself for the criticism of the 'Edinburgh Review' on his verses 'Hours of Idleness,' Stott or 'Hafiz,' who appears to have been specially obnoxious to the writer, is mentioned three times. But to be satirised in company with Scott, Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, and to have incurred the wrath of Byron was no small honour,

and secured for Thomas Stott a modest niche in the temple of fame. Byron wrote:

> Nor less new schools of Poetry arise,
> Where dull pretenders grapple for the prize.
> O'er taste awhile these pseudo-bards prevail,
> Each country book-club bows the knee to Baal,
> And, hurling lawful genius from the throne,
> Erects a shrine and idol of its own.
> Some leaden calf—but whom it matters not,
> From soaring Southey down to grovelling Stott.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> As for the smaller fry who swarm in shoals,
> From silly Hafiz up to simple Bowles.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Let Stott, Carlisle, Matilda and the rest
> Of Grub Street and of Grosvenor Place the best;
> Scrawl on, till death release us from the strain
> Or Commonsense assert her own again.

Lord Byron subsequently regretted the 'tone and temper' of this poem.

Dromore or the Great Ridge is situated on the Great North Road, sixty-six Irish miles from Dublin, and owes its prosperity to the linen manufacture that enriches the neighbouring country. The land, which is divided into very small fields, reminds the traveller of the billows of a troubled ocean, by reason of the little hillocks with which its surface is covered. The Mount of Dromore is the best specimen of those ancient forts or monuments in the north of Ireland, of which the origin is unknown.

For a possible explanation we can only turn to another local poet, Romney Robinson, a youthful genius so named by his father, the eminent Dromore portrait painter, in compliment to his great master, whose artistic temperament, transmitted by the name,

manifested itself in a 'remarkable structure of the infant's nerves that affected his animal frame.' Inharmonious sounds produced in him 'sensations of sickness.' At the age of two he was moved to tears by pathetic passages in the 'Hermit of Warkworth,' and at three he was able to recite the stanzas that 'soothed his infant pains.' In a poem composed in his ninth year, when on a visit to the Bishop at Dromore House, he tells us

> Perhaps this Mount, by Danish tyrants reared,
> Proved a safe refuge in the dreadful hour

when they were assailed by their enemies, or

> Perhaps 'twas fashioned by an army's hands,
> Where some brave hero breathed his last in war,

as a sepulchral monument. In later times the Mount served a different purpose, and, according to Stott, every Easter Monday

> What time the primrose rous'd from winter nap.
> . . . . . .
> Hither the youthful multitude repair,
> And as they climb the Mount, their shouts resound in air.
> . . . . . .

And here they

> Tell their tales and pledge their vows of love;

but, being a cynic, he concludes they

> Haply fix the day when Hymen's band

shall

> Crown their wishes with the promised land
> At distance always bright, but bleak sometimes at hand.

Owing to Bishop Percy's influence, the ruins of the old castle of Dromore were saved from complete destruction. Hearing that the proprietor, a linen

merchant, was using it as a stone quarry, he persuaded him to desist, and gave him a certain quantity of bog land as a compensation for the loss of this handy and inexpensive building material.

In the present day, the traveller arriving at Dromore by train will, on his way to the Market Place, pass the entrance gates that lead through a long avenue to the Bishop's Palace. The comfortable square Georgian building, described as a 'respectable country house,' was built in 1781 by Bishop Beresford, but, as we have seen, was completed and paid for by Bishop Percy, when in the following year he succeeded to the See. No period of architecture has ever equalled in convenience these square blocks with their handsome, lofty rooms, where a large party may be entertained with ease, or the owners may enjoy a quiet existence without any feeling of being over-housed. The Palace of Dromore was on a modified scale. The usual large central hall, decorated by the skill of Adam, with glass dome and galleries running round, was omitted, and only an ordinary serviceable staircase was substituted.

The grounds were planted by Bishop Percy, in imitation of those of his early friend Shenstone at the Leasowes. He clothed the surrounding hills with woods and planted a glen in view of the drawing-room window. The landscape was farther improved by the addition of artificial water, the value of which was fully recognised in the eighteenth century. The Georgian Bishops, to whose care were committed the souls of the Protestant population of Ireland, were by no means indifferent to their surroundings. George III. congratulated Dr. Dodgson on being translated from the See of Ossory to that of Elphin, and told him he 'ought to be thankful to have got away from a palace where

the stabling was so bad.' On the appointment of one of Lord Bute's younger sons to the Primacy of Ireland, the King pointed out that 'the Irish climate was damp, but uncommonly mild, and consequently not void of merit.'

The house that Bishop Percy thus adorned now stands empty and desolate. In 1842, when the See was again annexed to that of Down and Connor, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the Palace and demesne to a Community of Jesuit Fathers. Local superstition maintains that they were driven out of their dwelling by the unrestful spirit of Dr. Percy; one member after another died in a mysterious manner, but probably from defective drainage, for the Bishop, even in this life, with its limited outlook, was the most tolerant of men. The dining-room, in which the Roman Catholic priest and the Unitarian minister, with other men of 'great and diversified talents,' frequently met as the guests of Bishop Percy, was converted by his successors into a chapel, and still shows traces of its later occupation.

At a time when religious animosities were fomented to serve political purposes, Dr. Percy showed equal liberality to all men of worth and learning, and in a country convulsed by religious hatred and intolerance, he 'let his moderation be known to all men.' This spirit proved, as Dr. Anderson wrote from Scotland, 'inexpressibly gratifying' to all his Presbyterian friends in the Border country, among whom were 'many good subjects who regretted their exclusion from civil and military offices, and hoped that the time might come when the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches would be placed on the same footing.'

Bishop Percy did his best to conciliate the different religionists at Dromore. In addition to the Cathedral Church and the Roman Catholic Chapel, the town con-

tained two dissenting meeting-houses, belonging to sects that were known as the 'Old' and 'New Lights.' An exceptionally severe winter induced the followers of all persuasions to unite in making a collection for the poor. The Bishop's chaplain preached in the principal meeting-house, and the offertory was collected by the Roman Catholic priest and the two dissenting ministers, who 'equally divided the pews amongst them, and distributed the collection impartially amongst the poor of their four congregations.' On such occasions Bishop Percy encouraged his clergy to plead the cause of the poor in any chapel or meeting-house where they might be invited to do so. He prided himself on the fact that in no part of Ireland was there more general harmony among all who differed in religious opinions, than in the diocese of Dromore. One common cause united all parties, for Catholics and Protestants alike in all their public notices begged of each other that, however hostile they might be in all other respects, they might at least be firmly united in resisting the payment of tithes.

During his occasional visits to England, Bishop Percy discouraged his clergy from any ill-timed absence from their duties. He wrote from Bath, on December 6, 1791, whither he had repaired for the benefit of Mrs. Percy's health, to one of his young incumbents, who inclined to follow his example and join in the winter gaieties of that fasionable resort:

'I understand that you are expected to set out for Bath from Waringstown on the 18th Dec.

'That day, being Sunday, I am sure you are too good a Clergyman to violate. I also submit to you, whether you had not better defer your journey till after the 25th, when I presume you will celebrate the Sacrament

of the Lord's Supper in your church. The laity are too apt to be remiss in this solemn act of religion. I know you will excuse these hints, which as a young Clergyman you will take in good part from an old one.'

To another clergyman he wrote:

. . . . . .

'I was very much concerned to see such vindictive reproaches from a wealthy creditor to a poor insolvent debtor, which are as common as they are unchristian. We should all reflect that we ourselves are insolvent debtors to God, to whom all our duty is a just debt, and woe to us if we are merciless to our own poor debtors. For our Saviour's own words are "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," therefore, if we have no pity, we bring down a curse every time we repeat the Lord's Prayer. I hope these considerations will operate in favour of poor John Campbell also, who, with all his defects, is a kind-hearted man, and has been too indulgent to his own debtors, so that whatever mercy you show him will set a fine pattern to the laity, and will be an unspeakable comfort to you in the solemn reckoning to which we are both hastening very fast. A few years *must*, and a few weeks *may*, put us out of the power of showing or receiving mercy. God grant that we may never lose sight of the great end for which all our riches were committed to us, so that when we render our account we may do it with joy and not with grief. I make no apology to a brother clergyman for happening to touch on these subjects, as I shall at all times be equally thankful for the like communications imparted to,

'Dear Sir,

'Yr. affec^{ly}.

'T. Dromore.'

The Bishop preserved among his papers an indignant remonstrance addressed to the Archbishop of Dublin from a clergyman who protested that the crime for which his Grace had prohibited him to preach was an attempt to give force and energy to his manner by laying aside the incumbrances of a written discourse. His fluency and the persuasive power of his tongue may be inferred from his writing, nor can we read his appeal without a feeling of indignation at the injustice of attempting to silence an orator consumed with a desire to exercise that 'gift of the gab' that has been granted to his race. He pleads:

'It is scarcely possible for a man really possessed of any talent not to have a feeling of it; if God had buried His good gifts in the ignorance of the possessor, all mankind would remain inactive. When a man is competent to the task, the method of preaching I had used is the true and only effectual one. Upon my exertions in the pulpit I rested all my hopes. I succeeded so far as to arrive at some degree of repute, but this proves my misfortune. What is my crime? . . . . No sooner do I exert myself to break from the crowd, but your Grace proceeds to destroy my prospects and shut me out of the possibilities of the wide world.'

After admitting that his letter might appear harsh, the writer adds:

'It is hard for a man to sit down patient of an injury, and to dress feelings that torture him in the cool, calm language of complacency and ease.'

Bishop Percy's love of literature, and his acquaintance with Edmund Burke, David Garrick, and others who could move men's minds by the force of eloquence and the power of elocution, made him earnestly impress

on the candidates for Holy Orders the absolute necessity of studying the art of reaching the hearts of their hearers through the read or spoken word. 'Fear,' he said, 'made them read too fast and too low, and also occasioned them to end their sentences in a disagreeable cadence not unlike a tone; this he trusted they would lose when they came to shake off their fears.' That fatal tone whose monotonous false emphasis is fast emptying our churches of all persuasions, whether 'high' or 'low,' has happily been recently brought before the notice of the English Church Congress. Sir Squire Bancroft complained that, even in the presence of death itself, he had heard St. Paul's message on the mystery of the resurrection droned and mouthed instead of being conveyed to the heart of the hearer with the simplicity and natural grace that extinguish art, and enable a man to say what he means, provided that he also means what he says.

Bishop Percy found Dromore 'a situation in every way agreeable to himself,' except with regard to its distance from the literary world. He was eight months in arrears with his reviews and magazines; and his letters were often not delivered at all. But his expatriation could not quench his love of learning, and he continued to devote his spare time to literature. The only work, however, which he published during the twenty-nine years that he was Bishop of Dromore was 'An Essay on the Origin of the English Stage, particularly the Historical Plays of Shakespeare,' which appeared in 1793.

Dr. Percy was surprised to find how little the original language of the Irish country was cultivated or understood by the aboriginal natives. Not a Fellow of Dublin College appeared to be able to read

a line in their old Irish manuscripts. In 1786 he wrote:

'Last winter we began to form a Society, in imitation of those of London and Edinburgh, for studying and preserving a knowledge of the antiquities of Ireland.'

This probably refers to the Royal Irish Academy, which was started in 1785, and of which Percy was one of the original members. His old spirit seems to have revived when he was once more among antiquaries and men of letters, for one evening at the Society he quarrelled with Colonel Vallancy,[1] whom he found very hot-tempered.

It will be remembered that Dr. Goldsmith had entrusted Percy with many of his papers, and had begged him to undertake to write his biography; but the Bishop either found no time to discharge the trust committed to him by his friend, or he was deterred through fear of associating himself with anything that might appear inconsistent with his episcopal position. In his day a bishop was expected, above all things, to be pompous. Sir William Pepys wrote of a newly chosen Bishop of Durham that he was 'as proper a person as could have been appointed, as his coldness and distance of manner will be less imputed to him as a fault in that very elevated station to which he is raised.'

When Goldsmith died, in 1774, Percy handed over the memoranda that he had received from the poet himself, with other materials collected by his relations,

[1] An officer in the Engineers, born 1721. While quartered in Ireland he made a study of the language and antiquities of the country. He wrote a Grammar and Dictionary of the Irish Language, and was a member of several scientific societies.

to Dr. Johnson, in order that he should write a biography, to be published as a separate work, for the benefit of Goldsmith's family.

Prior excuses Johnson for not having included Goldsmith in his 'Lives of the Poets' on the score of a dispute with Carnan, the bookseller, about the copyright of 'She Stoops to Conquer.' It was probably also owing to the impracticability of Carnan, who was a man 'at variance with all his brethren,' that the project of this other work fell to the ground. But what appears less excusable is Dr. Johnson's indifference in the matter, for 'he utterly forgot the whole subject, and lost many of the papers that Dr. Percy had transferred to him.'

For nearly thirty years nothing was done. During his residence in Dublin, Bishop Percy discovered the destitute condition of Goldsmith's family and begged the assistance of his literary friends in London. He suggested that each member of the Club should subscribe a guinea, but this small mark of appreciation of one of its most distinguished members was refused. After several years of starvation, the honest cabinet-maker, Maurice Goldsmith, was given a small place in the Licence Office in Dublin, and was made mace-bearer to the newly formed Irish Academy, and in 1793 Esther Goldsmith begged for the post of housekeeper to the same institution, a position in which she would be permitted to sweep out the academic dust. Under a sudden impulse of compassion for the family, Bishop Percy had, in 1785, issued proposals for an edition of Goldsmith's writings to be published for their benefit. The men of letters in Goldsmith's native land welcomed this attempt, and one of their number, William Jessop, wrote from Lismore on September 26, 1785:

'I am happy to find that your Lordship has again employed your pen for the public. Otherwise I should conclude that your genius had been chilled by the damps of our Bœotian climate. I have no doubt that you have erected for Goldsmith a more valuable monument than sculpture even in Westminster Abbey could bestow. He was my college class fellow; but with regret I own that I knew him little, and was very seldom in his company. I had not sufficient penetration to discover in Admetus's herdsman the concealed Apollo. You never saw him until an intercourse with life must have, in some degree, planed down his ruggedness. But it is a fact that in his college days his aspect and manners were uncommonly against him. Nor was he at all distinguished in the academic line. His tutor, Dr. Wilder, often said that he had parts, but nobody believed him. To us he seemed nothing but a lounger. I still indeed fancy it was distress that scourged him into the temple of fame. It is remarkable that our other genius of the same period, Edmund Burke, was among us equally unnoticed. A college was too narrow a stage for such a tumbler to show his feats of activity. But that a lad so mild, bashful, and retired, should change at once into a capital orator, demagogue, and statesman, was a metamorphosis almost as incredible as the wildest that Ovid has imagined. It was fortunate however both for him and Goldsmith that they crossed the Channel. England is the sunny side of the hill, where the seedlings of genius shoot quickly into fruitage; this kingdom is its northern aspect, where bleakness, and a total want of sunshine, condemn them to stunting and sterility.'

After years passed in collecting material, nothing was done until an enthusiastic Irish clergyman, Dr.

Thomas Campbell, offered to edit the 'Life of Goldsmith,' under Bishop Percy's direction. He is described by Mrs. Thrale as a 'flashy, handsome, hot-headed, loud and lively Irishman'; his good humour was of that irrepressible kind that could boast of being able to live with a man of 'ever so odd a temper.' He professed himself equally ready to black Dr. Johnson's shoes or shed his blood for him. In the matter of flattery he outran Mrs. Thrale to such an extent that she could only borrow one of his own phrases and exclaim 'Upon my honour, sir, I'm but a twitter to him.' When Campbell came from the North of Ireland on purpose to see Johnson, with the same enthusiasm that Corelli had come to England to see Purcell, only to find that he had died, the Doctor exclaimed 'I should not wish to be dead in order to disappoint so foolish a person.' Dr. Campbell was fond of dabbling in literature during his leisure hours in his comfortable Irish Rectory of Clones in Monaghan. He promised to conduct the work in a way that would not 'make the Bishop blush,' adding that it would always be in Percy's power to expunge, till it was 'brought into some shape that would not disgust him.' Though the Bishop declared he had 'particular reasons for not wishing to appear as Goldsmith's ostensible biographer,' Campbell naturally desired to introduce his name, for he had not only supplied the material, but had also added many notes which he had taken down from Goldsmith's own mouth. Even in the account of his first visit to Goldsmith the Bishop wished his identity to be concealed. 'Could there be any harm,' urged Campbell, 'in letting the world know who the visitant was? If the dignity of the guest were concealed, the facts would lose their authenticity.'

Campbell was engaged in this work from the spring of 1790 to the autumn of 1791. The manuscript was sent to the Bishop, who made copious notes in its margin, which his chaplain, Dr. Boyd, embodied in the text, re-writing portions at Percy's suggestion, and putting the whole into shape. In January 1796 everything remained still unsettled as to the publication of the work, for the 'trade' were already reaping a rich harvest from Goldsmith's works, and were unwilling that on this one edition a reasonable percentage should go to the benefit of the author's family. The dispute raged for over a year and a half, in spite of the assurance of Percy's literary friends that the booksellers would hardly think it prudent to 'provoke a pen so pointed and popular as his.' Percy insisted that the family should have a sum of money and a few copies for sale. Cadell and Davies, on behalf of the booksellers, refused to make any money payment, and only offered 250 unbound copies, all of which were to be sold in Ireland, the Bishop himself being charged with the carriage and the cost of binding. If the right of selling them in England was granted, the family were to content themselves with 200 copies stitched in 'blue paper.' Great anger and excitement prevailed on both sides during the prolonged dispute that followed. The Bishop at length reluctantly consented to take, in exchange for the Memoir which he had placed in Cadell and Davies's hands, 250 unbound copies of the Miscellaneous Works, to which it was prefixed—125 to be sold in Dublin, and 125 in London, on behalf of the Goldsmith family.

But fresh trouble arose, for the trade could not settle among themselves what the edition was to contain; the Bishop's patience was exhausted, and he

refused further help. A new editor was chosen in the person of Mr. Rose (the friend of Cowper); Malone joined Percy in protesting against any tampering with the Memoir, but this protest was disregarded, and the Bishop's name was finally withdrawn from the scheme. So the matter stood in 1800.

In the meanwhile Goldsmith's last surviving brother had died in London in great poverty, with little or no relief. The only daughter of his eldest brother Henry also died in Dublin before her small share of the profits could be apportioned to her, while her mother was matron of the Meath Infirmary. Maurice Goldsmith's widow and sisters were in abject poverty. 'A few sold and unsold shabby books' in sheets 'represented their gains, while the booksellers, having sold all the impressions of the collected works reserved for themselves, had since issued two handsome editions, unencumbered with any obligations to the family of the author,' whose welfare the English public showed little zeal to promote.

This edition of Goldsmith's Miscellaneous Works was finally issued in 4 vols. 8vo. in 1801.

Dr. Percy's assistance was also sought by Boswell for his famous biographical work. On March 20, 1785, after the death of Dr. Johnson, he wrote to the Bishop:

'It is a great consolation to me now that I was so assiduous in collecting the wisdom and wit of that wonderful man. It is long since I resolved to write his life and conversation. He communicated to me a thousand particulars, from his earliest years upwards to the dignified intellectual state in which we have beheld him with awe and admiration. If your Lordship will favour me with anything concerning him, I shall be much obliged to you.'

In answer to this letter the Bishop sent Boswell a Greek epitaph of Dr. Johnson's on his poor friend Oliver Goldsmith, with a few details of Johnson's early life.

He added:

'I have neglected to commit to writing the many *bon mots* I have heard, but I recollect one. He was told of a man who had been obliged to apply to his neighbour, with whom he was not on very cordial terms, for a small piece of ground which he thought necessary to complete his fine gardens. "See," said the sage, "how inordinate desires enslave a man, and how they humiliate and enthral the proudest mind; here is a man submits to beg a favour from one he does not love, because he has made a garden-walk essential to his happiness!"'

The Bishop, as usual, desired his name might not be mentioned. Boswell answered:

'As to suppressing y^r^ Lordship's name when relating the very few anecdotes of Johnson with which you have favoured me, I will do anything to oblige you but that very thing. I owe it to the authenticity of my work, to its respectability, and to the credit of my illustrious friend, to introduce as many names of eminent persons as I can. It is a very small portion which is sanctioned by that of your Lordship, and there is nothing even bordering on impropriety. Believe me, my Lord, you are not the only Bishop in the number of great men with which my pages are graced. I am quite resolute as to this matter.'

This morbid dread of his name being mentioned seems unaccountable in a man whose life was so blameless as that of the Bishop of Dromore. The golden rule laid down by the descendant[1] of his colleague,

[1] Lewis Carroll.

Bishop Dodgson, 'Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves,' would have allowed him to go fearlessly forward, without any apprehension as to the manner in which his writings might affect his reputation.

Fresh anxieties on this score were occasioned by the threatened publication of the correspondence of another literary friend. To the editor he wrote in 1798:

'I have lately heard that you are preparing to publish the correspondence of the late Sir James Stonhouse. If among his letters you should find any written by me, I hope you will not commit them to the press without allowing me to judge whether I think them fit for publication. But indeed I cannot apprehend, from a conscientious clergyman like yourself, so illiberal a procedure as to publish anyone's private unguarded letters, without his consent. . . .

'You may not perhaps have heard of the fate of the late Biographer of Johnson (Boswell), or what occasioned his death, which soon followed that Publication. In consequence of his violating the primary law of civil society in publishing a man's unreserved correspondence, and unguarded conversation, he became so shunned and scouted, that with every agreeable talent for lively converse, a fund of anecdotes, and a considerable elevation in society, he was so studiously excluded from all decent company, that he was driven into deplorable habits of drinking, which speedily terminated a life that seemed formed for a long duration. If I can assist your worthy pursuits, I shall be glad to concur with you in paying every just tribute to the memory of Sir James Stonhouse.'

Horace Walpole considered that, in his 'Life of Johnson,' Boswell had used his enemies, Mrs. Piozzi,

Mrs. Montagu, and Bishop Percy shamefully, by that kind of libel that enables a man to abuse the living by quoting the opinion of the dead. James Boswell recalled many pleasant hours that he had spent with Dr. Percy, not only in London, but at Edinburgh, Alnwick and Carlisle. His subsequent feeling of aversion was probably due to the Bishop's having presumed to oppose his great master in a manner as emphatic, if not as forcible, as his own. While able to bully Johnson and idealise his wife, it has also been suggested that, judging from the attention Dr. Percy received wherever he went, 'it is evident he must have been socially extremely agreeable.'

This question is best answered by Fanny Burney, who, soon after her arrival at Bath in 1791, 'found cards left for her by the Bishop of Dromore, Mrs. Percy and their two daughters. The Bishop had been informed of her arrival by Lady Spencer, and after the first formal visits were exchanged, he came round and had a pleasant little chat with her. She found him perfectly easy and unassuming, very communicative, but not very entertaining, because too prolix. He was otherwise intelligent and of good commerce.' He renewed his acquaintance with Fanny Burney the following year at the trial of Warren Hastings, where all the world of fashion assembled. During the proceedings she heard a grave man's voice behind her saying 'Is not that Miss Burney?' She twirled round and saw the Bishop of Dromore, Mrs. Percy and their two daughters.

In 1790 Bishop Percy passed some months amid 'all the hurry of a Dublin winter'; in fact his duties in the Irish House of Lords generally necessitated his spending the season in the Irish capital.

The two following years he was in England, but by the middle of August 1793 he and his family were settled at Dromore, where they found the diocese in a peaceful and prosperous condition. The crossing of 120 miles was accomplished in twenty-four hours, which was then reckoned a quick and desirable passage; a fair wind had wafted them most pleasantly along the Welsh coast, but about midnight a squall arose that tossed them about and made them all very ill. A journey to the North of Ireland was a formidable undertaking, and occupied several days when the wind was contrary. The Bishop might therefore safely conclude his letters to his friends with his usual 'come and see us.' In 1785 Dr. Lort and his wife visited Bishop Porteus at Chester, and, 'as Mrs. Lort possessed the necessary good health, temper, and spirits to be an excellent traveller,' when she found herself so far on the road to Ireland, she desired her husband to take her thither. But the natural repulsion that made a sea voyage 'ever a serious matter' gained force as they approached the ocean, and from Chester Dr. Lort wrote to Bishop Percy, 'Whether we shall ever be nearer Ireland, God knows; at least I think it will not be this summer. If an air balloon could transport us thither, we should be glad of the meeting.' Another pressing invitation caused Dr. Lort to confer with the captain of an Irish packet on the quay at Liverpool, who, in hopes of tempting him to embark for Dublin, begged him to inspect his accommodation. But, in spite of all inducements, he determined, if he ever went to Ireland, it would not be from Liverpool, or near the time of the equinox. So he returned safely to Savile Row, where he hoped 'to remain quiet for some months to come.'

The Piozzis were also invited to stay at Dromore, but there does not seem to be any record of their visit.

For such dangerous enterprises good Queen Charlotte showed the right spirit. She had a most hazardous voyage to England when, as a stranger, she came to marry our King. But while her ladies were crying out from fear and discomfort, she consoled them, and remained herself undaunted. When the tempest raged she prayed and sang Luther's hymns, and when it subsided a little she prepared to meet her future and as yet unseen lord and master in a loyal spirit by learning to play the air of 'God save the King' on her guitar. With 'a heart for any fate,' she confidently declared that 'God had not singled her out for nothing, and that if He allowed her to perish it was to save her from greater trials.'

We are able to get some insight into the early years of Bishop Percy's life in Ireland, and of the state of literature in that country, by means of a correspondence he carried on with William Jessop, a clergyman at Lismore, in County Cork. The character and genius of the writer, whom Percy never saw, induced him to keep all his letters. Though the Bishop's answers do not appear to have been preserved, they are aptly compared by the recipient to 'fine days in winter, that are to be welcomed, and enjoyed, but not expected.'

William Jessop wrote from Lismore, in 1784, to express his admiration of Percy's 'Hermit of Warkworth.' Fearing that his praise might appear to savour of self-interested flattery to a newly appointed Bishop, he hastened to add that he had no wishes or hopes of preferment in the diocese of Dromore or elsewhere. He had, he declared, no designs upon Bishop Percy, 'for whose talents he felt much greater respect

than for his station,' though the praises of a parson on the verses of a bishop might wear a questionable shape.[1] He had stricken his roots so deep in Ulster that transplantation would undo him, and the house he had built and the garden he had planted at Lismore he regarded with doting partiality as his only children. Instead of renewing his youth, he prolonged his old age, for, though he lived to be upwards of ninety, he described himself in his fifty-seventh year as a wretchedly infirm old bachelor. With an income of £300, the wealth of Peru or Mexico would to him be the vainest of superfluities. He could drink a little wine, occasionally buy a book, keep a carriage, and, what is more dear to the Irish heart, a servant in livery. But, above all, he maintained in his house a minstrel, whom his ill-natured neighbours described as a blind harper. When basking by his fireside, inhaling his antiquated lays, the old man declared he felt 'as great as an abbot or a feudal baron—nay, as a Percy himself.'

The school-fellow of Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke, and afterwards a schoolmaster himself, William Jessop delighted in making Latin verses, but his

[1] Jessop's obsequious spirit had received a rebuke from Dr. Johnson in the following letter, which is now in the possession of Bishop Percy's great-granddaughter, Miss Constance Meade:

'Sir,—If your letter had been less ceremonious it would not have pleased me less. I read poor Grierson's paper with a very tender remembrance both of his learning and his humour. What you propose to offer to the world is well wanting in our language, and as I have no reason to doubt your ability to supply the deficiency, I shall be willing to do anything that can be reasonably required. You will therefore, if you do not change your mind, contrive to transmit your book to

'Sir,

'Your most obedient servant,

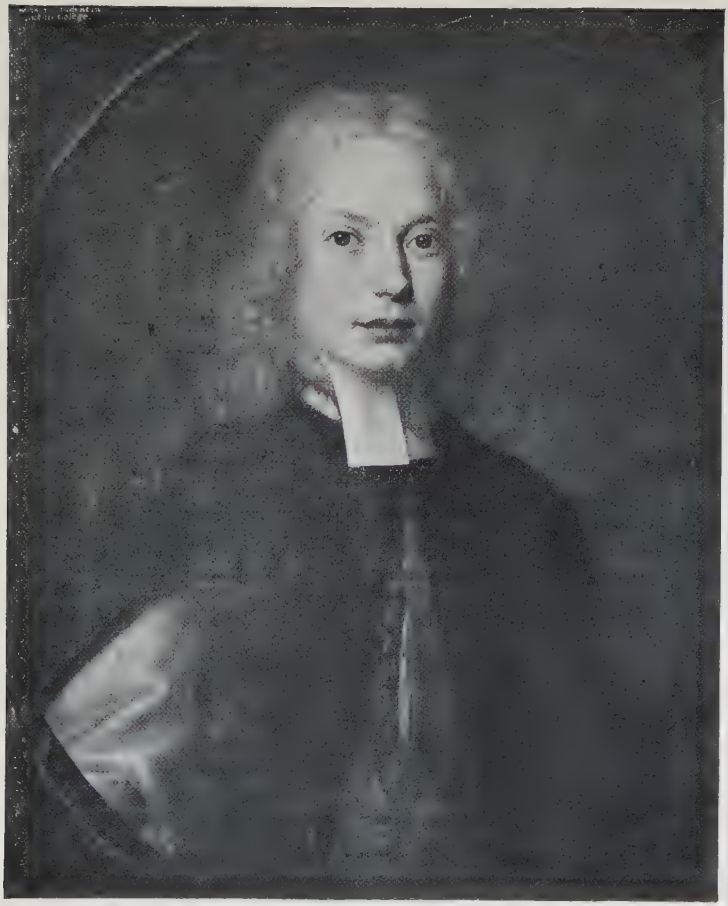
'Sam: Johnson.

'Johnson's Court in Fleet Street,
'June 28th, 1766.'

attempts had been severely discountenanced by his compatriots He wrote:

'The Irish are unmerciful critics on the literary attempts of their own *resident* countrymen. And if any set of them is severer than the rest, it is the clergy upon the efforts of their brethren. As publishing is rather a phenomenon in the kingdom, he who risks it may seem to claim uncommon distinction. This, his colleagues are too proud to concede, and too indolent to contest, by trying their own fortunes at the press. Therefore they decry the adventurer. At present I am on the best terms with my reverend neighbours, not one of whom even suspects me to be guilty of rhyming. But were anything of mine to see the light, I know they would call me, when absent, a coxcomb and a dunce, and when present, a poet; but with a look and accent which should make the title equivalent to a poetaster; a character which no one thinks eligible. I shall therefore adhere faithfully to my Horatian motto, "He who has remained hidden has lived well." The art of writing is, in Ireland, but a helpless infant, every one ought to assist in rearing it. The raw materials we have; but want skill to manufacture them into merchantable pieces. It was only in England that all the Irish writers learned the trade of authorism. This was the case with Roscommon, the three Orreries, Denham, Southerne, Congreve, Steele, Swift, Parnell, Goldsmith, Sterne, Burke, the three Sheridans, Preston, Jephson; besides a multitude of minor names; such as Brooke, Bickerstaffe, Macklin, Canning, Kelly, Murphy, O'Hara, &c. Irish genius seems to be like Madeira; which, until it has made a voyage, never gets its flavour.'

As William Jessop's poetic muse required not only a minstrel but a lady to whom he might address his



PORTRAIT OF JONATHAN SWIFT.

Rescued from destruction by Bishop Percy.

(*Now in the possession of Miss Constance Meade.*)

sonnets, he selected for that purpose Miss Mary Bagges, a most engaging infant, to whom, from her fourth to her fourteenth year, he dedicated his songs. Possibly she represented to him

> The touch of a vanished hand
> And the sound of a voice that is still.

A poem that he had composed thirty-two years before concludes:

> My gazing eye, my list'ning ear
> Were strained to view her, and to hear.
> . . . . .
> But cease, my Muse; it is not safe
> With these fond thoughts my heart to chafe;
> Oh rase, kind Mem'ry, from thy hoarded store
> A transport past, and gone, which can return no more.

'As we Lismorians,' wrote Jessop, 'are tremblingly alive to anything that touches the honour of our town, I was hurt to see your Lordship express surprise at your collection of ancient ballads having reached thus far. I assure you that, from its first publication, it was, in this neighbourhood, a favourite work. I know not how gentle poesy may be realised among the children of the rigid north, where, I presume, linen and rebellion are the principal objects of attention, but here both our climate and our people have a milder and more genial temper. Lismore had once a famous university; and, as the single gooseberry bush, and the few flowers, scattered around Warkworth Hermitage, shew that it was once adorned with a garden, so there are still here some relics of taste, to indicate that in days of yore Lismore was an academic soil. Though it is an obscure corner, yet it is sometimes entertained with curious objects. We had lately a live camel here; and, not many many days ago, a live poet, Joseph

Sterling. He came merely to converse with our glens, mountains, river, castle, and cathedral. If he travelled on his brazen horse, he must have concealed him in some of our caves and thickets; for certain it is, that he made his entry into the town on foot. A gentleman brought him, by accident, to my house. I pressed him to accept its entertainment, and he stayed with me a week. From dinner time I had the pleasure of his company, but all his mornings he passed in walking, and, I suppose, in poetising: exercises too severe for so weak a frame as mine to partake in. I love versifying, which is only riding a hobbyhorse about one's room; but poetising, which is galloping over hill and dale upon a fiery courser, would immediately make my head giddy. Sterling permitted me to read a life that he has written of Tamerlane. I blush to see myself a prebendary, and three vicars, while this man has not sixpence a year by his profession. It may comfort him to reflect that hereafter, when the world may, instead of bread, give him a stone, he will make an admirable bust; and to miss his likeness will be impossible. He looks as if he fed entirely upon laurels; which, though finely flavoured, are known to have unhealthful juices. I consider him as a Don Quixote in poetry, though, it seems, without a Rozinante. If I were in good plight (but I have a face and figure more rueful than his own) I should myself supply him with another requisite, and attend him as his poetical Sancho. He is a true cosmopolite, having his home everywhere and nowhere. Most of last summer he passed in a tent, upon the top of a mountain, about a dozen miles from this town, with an eccentric mortal, a Colonel Blakeney. Was ever bard more favourably stationed for *building*, as Milton phrases it, *the lofty rhime*? Their only com-

panions were their dogs, guns, books, and one old soldier, who was cook, valet de chambre, major-domo, lifeguardsman, laundress, and everything in their family. I wish your Lordship had Sterling at Dromore, as he would please you by his genius, learning, and complete simplicity. He is quite pellucid, and has no artifice, like that shining, slippery, poisonous substance, quicksilver, which is spread behind the glass to deaden its transparency, and reduce it to the sole power of reflecting other people's likenesses. He spent a fortnight with me here at Christmas, which for him was a long time to be stationary, and left me his MS. of Tamerlane. He has published, in London, a large volume of his poems. Most of these are sonnets. Of sonnets I never was a lover, as they have generally seemed to me the very quintessence of nihility, abounding in fine words, and destitute of meaning; but Sterling's are, I believe, as good as most of their family. He is undoubtedly the greatest practical peripatetic of modern times. His travelling equipage is only an Herculean crabstick and a pair of stockings, with a shirt, in his pocket. Thus accoutred he rambles sometimes to Dublin, London and Paris, but with more delight through the bogs of Connaught and Munster, the Caledonian highlands, and the Cambrian mountains. He is a real epicure when he has an opportunity, yet so pliant is his appetite that he is just as well contented with potatoes and buttermilk, or oaten cake and whiskey, in a hovel. And in the same manner he is perfectly indifferent whether he keeps company with peers or with sans culottes. No mention of his wife and children ever passes his lips, though he has both. His motive for marrying a pennyless and friendless young woman was a generous one. After he had been married a

few weeks he said to her very calmly: "I expected to find a nuptial life pleasanter than my rambling one; but as it is not I shall resume my wanderings. My fortune is £400 a year. Half of it is yours." Once a year he visits her for two or three days. Such a character in a novel would appear unnatural, yet in Sterling it is joined to much humanity, and a strong sense of moral rectitude.'

Bishop Percy became possessed of an authentic portrait of Swift in the following manner. An old 'family mansion house' in the County of Louth was about to be rebuilt, and all the pictures in it were sent to Dublin to be sold, as the proprietor did 'not choose to be at the expense of new frames for them, and he thought their old black ones would look unsuitable in his new house.' Dean Swift was the college friend of a bygone member of the family, and spent his vacations as a guest in their house. When the family portraits were painted, Swift's was done among the rest, and remained in the house until it was pulled down.

William Jessop added an autograph letter of Swift's to Percy's collection, and wrote:

'I believe it is an autograph of a man [Swift], who in his day had some celebrity, to a woman of the same description. With her I had several conversations; but not indeed until she was reduced to a state of burned brandy and fired down into weakness; in clearer language not until drunkenness had consumed her faculties. Yet she still retained some vestiges of that wit, which had ranked her amongst the foremost of Swift's female worshippers.'

CHAPTER XI

1779–1796

Space forbids a lengthy digression on the distressful state of Percy's adopted country; the troubled period through which he lived can therefore only be alluded to in this work in so far as it affected himself. The injustice of the English Government in suppressing the trade of Ireland was as fully realised in the days of Percy as it had been in those of Swift. Everyone will remember the ready wit with which, at a Sheriff's feast, when someone called out, among other toasts, 'Mr. Dean, the trade of Ireland,' Swift quickly responded, 'Sir, I drink to no memories.'

The following quotation from a letter written by Elizabeth Carter in 1778 shows that the weakness of the English Government almost incited the *Bas Bleu* ladies to something like a suffragette movement:

'You have doubtless read of the promises made to the Irish by our Ministry with respect to their trade, to which they seem particularly entitled by their generous behaviour in our present difficulties. The selfish temper of some of our trading towns is alarmed at this scheme; our Ministers are frightened at their threats, and it is thought the Irish will be sacrificed to their fears, and thus they will be more exasperated than ever. Pray do not you think these are fine times for us dowagers and spinsters, if we have a mind to get seats in the House of Commons? By signifying

to the Ministers, that if our demand is refused we will *rebel*, all that our hearts can wish will be granted immediately.'

She wrote the following year:

'If every foreign island and continent is torn from us, fare them well! but God in His mercy preserve Great Britain and Ireland to us. I wish the spirited votes of the Irish Parliament may prevail on our Ministers to grant, what they might have granted with better grace last year. But this is a procrastinating age. Our armies march too late, our fleets sail too late, and our concessions are made so late that no one will thank us for them.'

In 1779, the year after Bishop Percy was appointed to Dromore, England was at war with France and Spain, and in the absence of the regular troops, then employed on foreign service, the coast of Great Britain was unprotected, and constantly threatened with invasion. Ireland was even in a more precarious position, for many of her inhabitants were in league with the enemy, seeking by foreign intervention to recover not only independence but that pre-eminence that some sanguine Teagues claimed for her, over her younger sister of the adjacent island. French louis d'or were said to be 'flying about Dublin in plenty.' The disturbance in 1761, known as the Whiteboy rising, had no connection with foreign foes, nor did it in any way resemble this later movement, but it had given the Irish a taste for nocturnal meetings, and had shown them how easy it was to do much mischief, with little danger to themselves.

While the Whiteboy disturbances were spreading in the south the Protestants of the north banded themselves together in the same manner and called

themselves 'Oakboys,' in consequence of the green oak-leaves which they wore on their hats. In Armagh there was also a Protestant organisation known as the 'Peep-of-day-boys,' who made nocturnal and daybreak visits to the houses of their Catholic neighbours, to search for the firearms which they were not legally allowed to possess. The assailed naturally made an organised resistance, and were known as the 'Defenders.'

Volunteers consequently armed themselves at their own expense to defend their country. They claimed as their principle, equal love to their fellow-subjects of all persuasions without distinctions, and the support of the laws, and of those who administer them. But gradually their patriotism became tainted by the revolutionary spirit, and many of the founders of the movement withdrew from it. In 1783 the delegates from the volunteer corps, in imitation of their American brethren, called themselves a 'congress,' and the arming and drilling of malcontents was carried on wholesale until it was declared illegal on March 11, 1793. In Dublin and other large towns bodies of men were enrolled, who were known as the National Guard. They wore green uniforms, and their buttons were decorated with a harp, but no crown.

Lord Edward FitzGerald is reported to have said that, if the French could enable 4000 volunteers to subsist in Ireland for a few months, a revolution could be effected.

William Jessop wrote in October 1784 to Bishop Percy:

'It gives me concern to see by the public papers that what is called Patriotism, with its hopeful babe, Volunteering, is, in the North, still alive and active. With us, thank Heaven, they are dead and buried; and

may they never rise more "*to fright the isle from her propriety.*" This prayer I pronounce *ex officio*, having been Chaplain to the Lismore Cavalry—a gallant squadron of all gentlemen. Not one of them had a disloyal thought; nor has this country ever formed an idea of sending delegates to congress. I wish your Lordship were seated in the south. You would like it better than your present situation. The Ultonians are Scots; in which word much is included. We are genuine Irish; well-natured, gay-tempered, and if sometimes a little absurd, so much the more diverting. Here we look upon Ulster as one grand volcano, ready every moment to shake the earth around it, and pour forth its burning lava. In the south the climate and the people are milder. Potatoes are a cooling diet; oaten bread and whisky are combustibles. Your Lordship, I presume, has seen Sir Richard Musgrave's political pamphlets. If he lived in Ulster, among those sons of Boreas, who are keen and fierce as their father, he would be demolished before the end of a month. But murder has not yet made a stride into our good-humoured province.'

But in spite of William Jessop's boasts of the peaceful state of the south, he was compelled to admit that the Duke of Rutland, during one of his viceregal visits, had met with very rough usage from his own parishioners. On March 11, 1786, he wrote:

'Since the reign of Henry II., when a congress of Irish Kings was convened in this town Lismore never saw so proud a day as lately. The Lord Lieutenant, encircled with Earls and Barons bold, held here a privy council; and there are now two proclamations, *Given at the castle of Lismore.* This has inflated with vanity every person and thing around us. Our river lifts

himself to a gigantic size, and kicks out of his way every sheep, pig, and haycock, that stands in it. Our mountain appears constantly in full dress; his head plastered with a whiter powder than any made in London or Paris. Even I have caught my share of the contagion, and am now talking "of Kings and Tetrarchs and all great things." To proceed, therefore, on the *grand pas*; perhaps your Lordship has never had a just account of the drubbing, that his vice-majesty underwent, from my own parishioners of Aglis. The following detail of it I had from the mouth of Mr. Uniack, who was his Grace's fellow martyr in the adventure. The Duke and Uniack were riding one evening from Youghal to Lord Grandison's attended by two aides-de-camp, and a Swiss valet. The rest of the suite were with the Duchess behind. They passed two men upon the road, to whom they gave no offence, unless their horses might have accidentally spattered them. One of them made a blow at the great personage with his cudgel, which missed him, and struck his horse. Upon this they dismounted, and seized the offender. For a time the prisoner went with them quietly, but, coming to a cluster of cabins, he attempted to escape. Provoked at this, Uniack gave him two or three blows upon the head. The peasants instantly sallied forth, and overwhelmed the two heroes with a shower of stones. The Duke, recollecting that he was Granby's son, bore the pounding with a truly Spartan patience; but the horses, less mindful of ancestry, burst from them, and ran away. In this distressful moment, up came the suite. But these were too puny a reinforcement to stem the torrent of Aglisian prowess; and the two defeated champions flew for refuge into Lord Grandison's plantation. The Duke was scarcely

hurt, and Uniack not much, as luckily the scene of combat supplied no ammunition of a considerable size. This odd affair dashed his Grace's spirits for the night, and the next morning news arrived that the man whom Uniack struck was dying. A Lord Lieutenant charged as an accomplice in murder would have made a fine perplexity for the lawyers. But care was taken of the man, and he recovered, though he still complains of what he terms a singing in his head.'

The Duke, who was described as a humane and amiable man, died soon afterwards. Shortly before his death he dined with Bishop Percy at Dromore, and Jessop expressed a hope that 'the more exalted hospitality of the castles and palaces in the north' had not given him the *coup de grâce*. He adds, 'If his ghost should rise, I hope Dromore House could say to it, "Why dost thou shake thy gory locks at me? Thou canst not say I did it."'[1]

During the disturbed state of the country many Irish Peers and Prelates found it convenient to make their headquarters elsewhere, and Dr. Robinson, Primate of Ireland, the brother of Mrs. Montagu (Queen of the Blues), who was subsequently raised to the Peerage as Baron Rokeby of Armagh, retired to Bath, where it was rumoured he intended to pass the remainder of his days. Bishop Percy wrote to him there, respectfully asking if he might be permitted to indulge a hope of seeing his Grace once more in Ireland, and telling him of the attacks made by Mr. Grattan on the Established Church in the Irish Parliament during the session of 1789.

Edmund Burke had written a pamphlet 'against

[1] An oval medallion of the Duke of Rutland hung in the hall at Dromore House, over the drawing-room door.

plundering Church property' that had given great satisfaction to the Irish Bishops and clergy; but in a private conversation, after fiercely inveighing against their rapacity, he added, 'The Scots are a sensible people; they have a poor country, and they have proportioned to it their Church establishment. You likewise have a very poor country; and you ought, as soon as possible, to bring down your clergy to something like the Scottish standard.' The convictions of public men, uttered under varying circumstances, will not always bear too close comparison. When Bishop Manningham's son, with more zeal than discretion, desired to publish in one volume the sermons his father had preached at different periods, the old man wisely replied, 'Prithee, Tom, let them alone, they lie quiet now; put them together, and they will fight.'

The reform of the Irish clergy was meanwhile beginning to come from within, for in 1791 the Bishops passed a resolution whereby 'clergymen who were utter strangers to the knowledge of their profession might be made less numerous than they are at present.' To this regulation the signature of the following five Prelates was wanting—Armagh (Lord Rokeby), Derry (Lord Bristol), Kildare, Limerick and Clogher, but perhaps their non-subscription was owing to their absence.

This movement was quickened by a sense of danger. Such attacks acted like that of the north wind, that caused the traveller to wrap his cloak more firmly round him, though when the sun shone he threw it off. In the reign of James II., Irish Protestants regularly attended public worship, because it was dangerous to do so; the descendants of these zealots hardly knew the way to their parish church.

In 1791 Dr. Percy, with his wife and daughters,

made 'a circuit of amusement' through Cheltenham, London, Windsor, and Oxford, where the Bishop inspected specimens of ancient handwriting in the Bodleian Library. They afterwards visited Bath for the benefit of Mrs. Percy's health, which remained in rather a precarious condition, in spite of the following infallible remedy prescribed by Hugh, second Duke of Northumberland, who wrote:

'I have known wonderful effects in the most violent disorders arise from the patient's taking the yoke of a new egg every morning fasting, I cannot avoid mentioning the circumstance to your Lordship, and shall feel myself particularly happy if it should prove the means of restoring Mrs. Percy to her health. I am informed that in the West Indies it is scarce ever known to have failed of success.'

The feeling caused by the events in America and France, that had stirred Ireland to its depths, was shaking men's minds in every corner of the United Kingdom. During the period of the French Revolution Bishop Percy was living among the literary world in London, and was present at a meeting of the Club on January 29, 1793. All the members appeared overpowered with horror at the execution 'by the French monsters, of their most saint-like Royal Martyr,' for the crime had been perpetrated during the previous week. The extremes of virtue and vice were represented, Walpole declared, by Louis XVI. and his accursed relation 'Egalité.' Even the most hardened regicide, when he found that the Duc d'Orléans voted for his cousin's death, exclaimed, 'If Egalité says yes, I say no.'

At this first meeting of the Club, after the tragic occurrence, there was the fullest attendance ever known.

Fifteen members were present, fourteen of whom were unanimous in expressing their disgust at the political event that still preyed upon their spirits. The one exception was Charles James Fox, who, with his adherents, had 'made a clamorous outcry against a war on the French wild beasts,' and in his letters to the electors of Westminster had stubbornly refused to recognise any danger to this country, and even urged the necessity of treating with France.

To everyone's astonishment, Fox appeared when about half the company were already assembled. After the first bows and cold salutations, and ill-suppressed looks of horror from four Bishops, the conversation stood still for several minutes. All were reserved and not a word of the martyred King or of politics was mentioned. Mr. Windham, who arrived late with young Burke, was obliged to sit at a side table. He, alone, was civil to Fox, but his companions never exchanged a word with him.

George Steevens, critic and Shakespeare commentator, was in the Chair, with the Duke of Leeds on his right and Charles Fox on his left, neither of whom said a word; Boswell tells us that Lord Ossory and Lord Lucan were equally silent and sulky. The taciturnity of John Hinchcliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, appeared almost demoniacal; John Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, Chaplain to Lord Bath (Pulteney), being more a man of the world, appeared very cheerful; Richard Marlay, Bishop of Clonfert, preserved his usual pleasant countenance; while Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, appeared frightened, like a barndoor fowl at the sight of a fox.

So great was the terror in England caused by the events in France that, during the time Pitt was at

Walmer Castle in the autumn of 1793, he was provided with a strong military guard, as it was feared a French boat might land on a dark night and carry off the biggest prize the revolutionary party had ever secured.

The disturbed state of the Bishop's diocese during his absence in England is best shown by the following note from his so-called secretary, Meredith Darby. From the writing we infer that the appointment was nominal, and that duties requiring physical, rather than mental, effort engaged the greater share of his attention. But as every Irishman is the descendant of kings, their humblest avocations are performed with dignity. Who but an Irishman could 'rear' potatoes?

'October 16th, 1792.

'I enclose your Lordship a handbill of the plan of the Dromore Revels [Rebels]. The "Star" of Sunday, as their is adishes [seditious] publication in it, both from a sicety [society] in Englan, and from the United Irishmen of Belfast. I am every day expecting to hear of Belfast and Dromore aluminated [illuminated] for joy of the news of the Duke of Brunswicke being defeated by the French.

'We are going on rearing the potatoes, and getting whome [home] the turfe.

'The weather is still very weet. I hope my Lady is quite well now.

'There is a great Review of volunteers at Rathfriland. The Dromore volunteers is to take 6 rowns [rounds] of cattrage [cartridges] with them for fear of the "Defenders".'

Jaunting-cars were found extremely useful in conveying soldiers through the country, and in a petition

preserved by Bishop Percy, the owners of hackney and mourning coaches, hearses, &c. represent to the Lords in Parliament assembled, that for 'some time past there has been a great decrease in the demand for their carriages owing to the universal use of umbrellas, and the great number of jaunting-cars, which have been of late set up.'

To the dull Saxon such new-fangled inventions appear inadequate to the purpose, but what is an Irishman without a grievance? An irate Ulsterman of bygone days complained to the then Sir Francis Macnaghten, that, though he had been a regular subscriber for years to the village hearse, 'neither kith nor kin of his had had a ride in it yet.'

Bishop Percy returned to Dromore during the summer of 1793, but the following year he was again obliged to leave his diocese at a critical moment, in consequence of the death of his cousin, William Cleveland, to whose estate he was heir-at-law. Business detained him in England until the summer of 1796. In the meanwhile the fourth edition of the 'Reliques' appeared, of which his nephew, the 'heir of both his names,' was the ostensible editor, and he took some interest in a new review (the name is not given) which was 'undertaken upon the principles of Christianity and loyalty.' Jessop welcomed it, as a successor and counteractor to the 'Monthly,' which he declared 'was a constant abettor of the most pestilent speculations in politics and religion.'

During this visit to England, Bishop Percy's eldest daughter, Barbara, married, in 1795, Mr. Samuel Isted, of Ecton, a Northamptonshire neighbour whose home was within six miles of Easton Maudit. Fanny Burney found Miss Percy a very natural and pleasing

character. In her new surroundings at Ecton, she charmed her neighbours by her graceful manner, while she delighted the hearts of her poorer neighbours by 'playing the lady bountiful.' She was most kindly received by all her husband's relations. His brother-in-law, William Sotheby, declared that Samuel Isted had been most fortunate in the great lottery of life, and trusted that he might prove worthy of the prize. In youth he had suffered from a taste for making 'scientific calculations on the hazards of the dice,' which sometimes played him false. This propensity Barbara Percy modified, and she even managed to please her mother-in-law, who wrote to her son on hearing of his engagement:

'My dear child,—As I have nothing so much at heart in this world, as to see you happily married, judge of my satisfaction at your choice of the very lady I should have recommended to you—your sisters can witness what pleasure it gives me to call Miss Percy daughter! My hearty Prayers are that ye may experience as large a share of felicity as ever falls to the lot of mortals! Ye have both seen enough of the follies of the world to prevent your being gull'd by its false allurements, and take my word for it that true happiness is only to be found in domestic life. Please God I get safe to Bath, I will cherish myself up in the hope of receiving ye there at my very best—if not, it will be soothing to my soul, as long as life lasts, that you are on the right road to happiness!'

Meanwhile the 'Oakboys' and 'Peep-of-day-boys' of Armagh were by no means inactive; they defeated the 'Defenders' at a spot called 'the Diamond,' and on September 21, 1795, a new organisation was formed to celebrate this victory. Oaths of secrecy

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were demanded from the members enrolled, who were known as Orange men, in compliment to William of Orange, who was supposed to have established Protestantism in the north of Ireland. This organisation soon became so strong that, in 1798, the commander-in-chief, General Knox, assured the Government that the safety of Ulster might be entrusted to the Orange men. Their enthusiasm for the pious and immortal memory of the great and good King William III., 'who saved us from popery, knavery, slavery, brass money[1] and wooden shoes,' is only to be equalled by the bigotry and intolerance with which they showered on their adversaries every possible expression of abuse.

If matters in Ireland were to be decided by the logic of kings, it appeared evident that the English must get the worst of it, for the French had twenty thousand men ready to invade Ireland, and, in 1796, Lord Edward FitzGerald was in treasonable communication on the subject with General Hoche. Happily the designs of Austria and Russia provided work for Napoleon's vast armament, that exceeded two hundred thousand men.

The following letter from Elizabeth Percy to her sister, Mrs. Isted, describes the alarm into which the inhabitants of Dromore House were thrown, on receiving intelligence from Lord Downshire of the reported landing of the French. The presence and protection of the three young Meades, sons of the Earl of Clanwilliam, (one of whom Elizabeth subsequently married), seems to have robbed the situation of half its terrors. Their home, Gill Hall, was within three miles of Dromore.

[1] Made from brass guns that were melted down.

'Dromore House,
'Wednesday, December 26th, 1796.

'My dearest Barbara,—You have no idea what severe weather we have here, the storm is so great you would imagine the house could not stand; and there is a deep snow. Last Monday I was complaining of black Mondays as I call them, having no post that day; we were quite alone, and, as the day closed in, the tempest increased. We were in Mama's dressing-room, Tom, my Mother, Henry [1] and myself, playing at Casino, my Father sitting by, reading; we were saying how snug we were to be in the house on such a night; just as we were speaking, about 8 o'clock, Docky entered with a letter in his hand; "A note to me," says I, thinking it came from Gill Hall. "No, mom," says he, with a long face, "it is an express for my Lord, from the Marquis of Downshire, who is in Dublin, and another is going to Lady Clanwilliam." Down we flung our cards and waited till my father had read it, with an impatience that absolutely brought on an ague fit. My father looked alarmed, and said, "The Marquis writes me word the French are landed at Bantry Bay, and advises us all instantly to set off for Dublin, and he has sent the same advice to Lady Clanwilliam; for the moment it is known, the 'United Irish' will rise, and this night may be our last." Upstairs Henry and I flew, my dressing-room was robbed of all ornaments in ten minutes, and my clothes taken out ready to pack up. I would not have Bet to help me, as my father wanted to have prayers over, that the lower servants might be sent to bed before

[1] Henry was probably the grandson of Lord Sussex. He afterwards became Lord Grey de Ruthvyn. He appears to have been left under the guardianship of Bishop Percy. Tom was the Bishop's nephew.

the carriages were ordered. Tom instantly set off on foot to Gill Hall to hear their intentions. To prayers we went; they were just over, when a great knocking was heard at the hall door. I guessed who it was, and I was right; for when the door opened, Tom returned with Colonel Meade and Edward wrapped up like watchmen, covered with snow. A long consultation ensued, my Father was for setting off to Dublin, the Colonel for staying; for he said he was in France at the beginning of the troubles, and he was certain half the miseries were brought on by the *Noblesse* flying. My father, who, you know, is no coward, said, "Very true, but the lower French and Irish are very different; every one of the latter being disaffected, and this moment I cannot depend on one of my labourers or gamekeepers, who are all United Irishmen." However, they agreed to part that night. When I went up into my room, there was Bet. twinkling her eyes about till she brought on a fine flood of tears; I asked her what was the matter. "Oh, Miss, I hear the French are come." I could not help smiling, tho' God knows I was not merrily inclined, for it has been a dismal Christmas. However, I don't wonder at her fright, for she came up into my dressing-room to look at the fire, and saw both rooms in confusion, ran down into Mama's apartment and found hers the same way. We, none of us, had any sleep that night, and never poor wretch rejoiced as I did when morning peeped. This night was more dreadful than that of November 28, when the massacre was threatened. At 8 o'clock next morning I went into the breakfast-room, and found Colonel Meade and his two brothers, whose faces were as long as ours. My Mother was not up, and my Father still in his study, so we chatted over our last

night's fears and were soon cheerful and happy. At 9 my Father and Colonel Meade set off to visit General Lake, where they heard that the French fleet had been seen off Bantry Bay, but this *heavenly* storm prevented them landing, and Lord Bridport was in pursuit of them. The Gen. has ordered us a Corporal's guard, and at a moment's warning he will send us a party of light horse to escort us to Dublin, so really, dear Barbara, I pity you being so *unfortunate* as to be married in England and to lose such a mark of distinction.'

Mr. White reported from Bantry on the 28th that 'the French came in with only 12 line-of-battle ships, some frigates, and from 20 to 30 transports; the rest of the armament having been dispersed by storms. One of their ships fell on board one of their own frigates, which instantly sunk with her entire crew, and a great number of soldiers; an officer, and seven seamen were all that escaped on shore, whom Mr. White immediately seized, and sent prisoners to Bandon.' He adds, 'The elements fought nobly for us. If Lord Bridport should come now, he has the whole covey in a net.'

At the close of the year 1796 many of the Irish prelates were flying from their sees in 'carriages without mitres.' Bishop Percy sent many of his valuable books and papers to Ecton, where they long remained under the care of his son-in-law, Mr. Isted. He stayed himself for some months in Dublin, and wrote on February 27, 1797, to a friend in England:

'I believe that the threats of the French to invade any part of Britain are feints to draw off the attention of your Government from Ireland, where they mean to strike the blow. England and Scotland are strong and safe enough, but Ireland is weak and vulnerable.'

The inhabitants of the British Isles assumed a bold countenance, for timidity would have only provoked insult at a moment when Napoleon was changing the face of Europe with a stroke of his pen. Kings, popes, and republics shrunk from his frown, and the whole world trembled under his shadow.

It was owing to the patriotic spirit of Sir Walter Scott that a force of mounted volunteers was organised in Scotland in 1797, and while drilling his cavalry he was inspired with his description of the battle of Flodden and other warlike pieces.

The victory of Sir John Jervis off Cape St. Vincent on February 14 gave a greater feeling of security to the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland. But in the summer of 1797 Dr. Percy and his family found it more convenient for many reasons to retire to England and pay a prolonged visit to Mr. and Mrs. Isted at Ecton. The Bishop was glad to exchange 'the turbulence of Ireland for the quiet of Northamptonshire.' He delighted in the society of his grandson, Ambrose Isted, to whom constant references are made in his letters. 'Fill,' he wrote, 'a whole letter about him, and I will desire no other news.'

But a terrible fear began to dawn on the parents and grandparents that this fine intelligent child was wanting in the power of speech and hearing, and in spite of their endeavours to explain away their dread, it gradually became evident that he was deaf and dumb.

The poor Bishop wrote: 'Pray tell me how Ambrose comes on with his feet, it is yet too early to inquire about his tongue.' 'Tell me about his hearing, what sounds he imitates. Though he may not hear well, does he begin to speak?' The sight of the little fellow's handwriting cheered Dr. Percy, and the

Duchess of Northumberland called him the little bookworm, for she discovered that he had inherited his grandfather's love of books. He was also nicknamed 'The little round O' in consequence of his attempt to imitate that sound. His relations clung to the hope that his taste for bell-ringing might prove that he had some sense of hearing, and the Bishop tried to persuade himself that his own brother had been unable to use his tongue until he was eight, though he afterwards acquired a fluent speech. But in spite of these infirmities, Ambrose Isted grew up to be one of the handsomest and most agreeable men of his day. He married twice, but left no family. At his death in 1881 the Ecton property passed to the descendants of his aunt, Mary Isted. She married William Sotheby, who translated Wieland's 'Oberon,' the 'Georgics' of Virgil, and Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' and was the author of several original poems. The present possessor of Ecton, Major-General Frederick Sotheby, chose a wife from the Border country that Thomas Percy loved so well. Her family (Macmillan-Scott of Wauchope) was at that time represented by Mr. Scott, whose wife wrote poetry that delighted the editor of the 'Reliques,' as well as Sir Walter Scott and other literary men. Robert Burns also honoured Mrs. Scott by addressing to her one of his poems.

Early in 1798 the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland wrote a letter to the Primate desiring him to summon the absent Irish bishops to their dioceses. In reply to the letter that Dr. Newcome consequently addressed to the Bishop of Dromore, Dr. Percy assured the Primate that he welcomed this opportunity of stating the cause of his absence from Ireland.

He wrote from Ecton on March 6:

'I have been obliged to advance large sums out of my revenue for the protection of the country in which my diocese is situated. I subscribed £100 to raise an excellent Corps of Yeomanry in Dromore itself, which did regular duty all last year with his Majesty's troops, and hath been of the greatest use in keeping the adjacent country in awe. The men must have suffer'd severely, if they had waited for their pay from the slow issues of the exhausted Treasury of Ireland. I therefore allowed my agent (Mr. Crane Brush) to advance out of my receipts whatever sums were necessary to supply the deficiencies, which he did so regularly, that at the beginning of November 1797 I was £791 out of pocket.

'Finding I could not live as I had been accustomed, either at Dromore or Dublin, I have availed myself of the asylum offer'd me here by my beloved daughter (Mrs. Isted), and his Excellency the Lord Lieut. having allowed me to visit her last summer, I have continued here ever since, living so retired that I have never once visited London or Bath, nor any other place of pleasurable resort. Having the advantage of an excellent Library, I trust I do not pass my time altogether unprofitably; and this place being in the direct road to Chester and Holyhead, I have as regular a communication with my diocese as if I resided in Dublin. I have now been 16 years Bishop of Dromore, and yet this is only the 3rd visit I have paid to England since I came to reside in Ireland. During the first 8 years I never once visited my native country.

'Individually I have as little to fear as any gentleman in the country; for mine was the only house in the neighbourhood which never had a military guard during the whole time of my residence. This security,

as well as the loyalty of our yeomen, I attribute to the good effects of the large Sunday Schools, which your Grace saw and approved of, and which have now been established about 12 years.'

To the copy of this letter kept by Bishop Percy he has added the following note in his own hand:

'*N.B.*—This letter the Primate suppressed, as he had not subscribed to any Yeoman-Corps himself, nor kept any Sunday School.'

Swift's satire on the English clergy, who, on setting out to preside over their appointed Irish sees, were robbed and murdered by highwaymen on Hounslow Heath, who personated their victims and discharged their functions, was perhaps no longer applicable to the Irish prelates at the end of the eighteenth century. Yet Irish bishoprics and livings were still looked upon as a convenient means of pensioning old retainers.

The Duke of Devonshire when Lord Lieutenant had brought over his French dancing-master, and in return for faithful services, thrust him into Holy Orders and inducted him into the living of Navan, though he could not speak a word of English.

The bishops were all now hastening back to their posts, or at least to their duties in the Irish capital. Dr. Percy started for Dublin about the middle of April, and it was reported that even the timid Bishop of Cloyne, 'with his wife and her Abigail, had posted through Shrewsbury in a chaise.'

The Bishop thus describes the celebrities that he met on the journey:

'At Oswestry I found the Inn was filled with a large party of Quakers. One of their principal female preachers was a Mrs. Darby of Colebrook Dale, with whose family I had formerly some correspondence,

so we exchanged a visit, and there was a curious *tête-à-tête* between a bishop and a preaching female. But we parted good friends and lamented that all mankind were not as peaceably inclined.

'At the next stage (Llangollen), as I alighted out of my chaise, I met the 2 celebrated Irish ladies, so much talked of for their romantic taste and great reading—viz. Lady Eleanor Butler (Aunt to Lord Ormonde) and Miss Ponsonby—who have formed to themselves one of the most delightful hermitages that ever was. Here all the world visits them, and they are more acquainted with all that is going on than any Ladies I have seen in the *Beau Monde*.

'I had great difficulty to tear myself away from these fair enchantresses, whose magic spell would have chained me there to the end of time, if I had not broke through it with no little violence to myself. It is now 20 years since these ladies left their friends in Ireland, and after exploring various parts of Wales, they at last settled near the river Dee, and under a mountain on the summit of which are the ruins of a castle belonging to the ancient Princes of Wales. In their most elegant library I was flattered to see all my grand works. Every new literary work of merit they have as soon as published, especially the most costly publications with superb engravings. Their villa is much in the style of Lord Orford's Strawberry Hill, but smaller, and not with so much cathedral imitation.'

After reading this account of the famous Irish ladies of Llangollen, it is with surprise that we find among the papers of Mr. Abbot (Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1801), which, by the kindness of his descendant, the present Lord Colchester, we have been permitted to use, that these ladies were not only

receiving a grant out of the public funds of their late unhappy country, but were clamouring for its continuance when by inadvertence it ceased. Miss Ponsonby wrote to Lord Castlereagh, explaining that a grant of 30*l.* concordatum money had been made to her, and a like sum to 'Mary Carrol' in trust for Lady Eleanor Butler, who, though not above receiving the money, could not condescend to do so in her own name. She begged him to represent her distress on finding that both names had been omitted in the warrant for the year. In forwarding this petition to Mr. Abbot, Lord Castlereagh added:

'I know how miserably plagued you must be with applications of this nature; the "Concordatum" distributions gave me more painful trouble than any circumstance connected with the government of Ireland.'

Mr. Abbot answered:

'I certainly directed that Miss Ponsonby and Lady Eleanor Butler should be secured on the Concordatum, and I suppose the omission must have been owing to the almoner not adverting to the name of Mary Carrol,[1] as designating Lady Eleanor Butler. This fund has been, in truth, the plague of my life.'

On his arrival in Dublin Dr. Percy found the hotels so full that he was obliged to take lodgings in Frederick Street, where he remained for more than a year. As soon as he could get his morning wig dressed, without which it was impossible to stir abroad, he called on Mrs. Law, the wife of the Bishop of Elphin, whom he found taking her breakfast at noon. She had had a 'great rout' the night before, and the company did not break up till three in the morning.

Meanwhile Mrs. Percy and her daughter Elizabeth

[1] The name of Lady Eleanor's maid.

remained with Mr. and Mrs. Isted at Ecton, sometimes making short visits to Tunbridge Wells or Brighton, where they 'joined housekeeping with the Isteds, for the Bishop was,' he declared, 'drained of all his money.' He expressed some anxiety concerning the payment of the tax for the arms and mitre on Mrs. Percy's coach, in which she took her 'light airings,' and the powder tax of her servants.

Dr. Percy's financial embarrassments seem to have been brought about, as is often the case, more by over-investing than by personal expenses. He purchased bank stock to buy off his land tax on his English estates, which reduced his balance at his bankers to 35*l.* He wrote to his wife on May 10:

'You must be very frugal and pay your tradesmen's bills, as much as you can, in drawing for them on my Bankers, at 21 or 25 days after date, which will please the tradesmen as well, and not press on my Bankers till they have received Mr. Brush's draft.'

When Mrs. Percy complained that she had received an uncivil letter from the bankers, her husband answered:

'I have written to the younger Gosling, a stupid brute, who has neither sense nor good manners, but he did not mean it uncivil, and only forgot to direct you to have whatever drafts you gave after date, upon stamps.'

The chief social event after the arrival of Bishop Percy in Dublin was the trial of the Earl of Kingston[1] for murder. In the eighteenth century the professional classes of Ireland were described by Dr. Anderson 'as not inferior to those in Britain, but the rest of the inhabitants, and more especially the upper classes, were

[1] See Lecky's *History of England.*

distinguished by excessive frivolity, ostentation, and luxury, with little taste for art—even the theatres being neglected.' Lord Orrery throws the whole blame for this state of things on St. Patrick, for when he banished poisonous animals from Ireland the saint in his fury seems to have cursed books as well. The doctrines of Voltaire and Rousseau found blind followers among the class who had not the intelligence or education to understand their teaching. Lord Kingston's eldest daughter, Lady Mountcashell, gloried in her unbelief, which she attributed to her governess, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 'who had freed her mind from all superstition.' Her most intimate friend, the famous Pamela, daughter of Madame de Genlis (instructress of the children of the Duc d'Orléans), was the wife of the rebel leader, Lord Edward FitzGerald, for whose apprehension a reward of 1000*l.* had been offered.

Dr. O'Beirne, Bishop of Meath, in a sermon on education, wherein he censured the French atheistical writers, was thought to have alluded to Lady Mountcashell's governess, who had written 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women,' and whose private life was the subject of much comment. Whereupon her former pupil complained of public allusions to her family, and the Bishop, to show that his meaning had been misinterpreted, and that his words had been too hastily appropriated by their rightful owners, delivered the same sermon a second time on the principle of the preacher who refused to give his congregation any other discourse until they had acted on his first. This explanation did not appease Lady Mountcashell, who made a caricature of the Bishop, and the quarrel was taken up by Lady Moira, her husband's grand-

mother, who openly professed the most violent enmity to religion.

Bishop Percy, nevertheless, remained on very friendly terms with Lady Moira, who was his near neighbour in County Down, and assisted her in her genealogical researches. She was a daughter of the celebrated Lady Huntingdon, who was an ardent follower of Wesley. Lord Moira was strongly opposed to the Government, consequently his wife elected to wear green stockings, which 'she took care to show.'

The trial of Lord Kingston was 'so fine and solemn' that Bishop Percy regretted his wife had missed one of the grandest shows in the kingdom. The prisoner was brought from the castle, dressed in black, with the axe carried before him, but, owing to extenuating circumstances, the jury found that killing was not murder.

On May 19 Lord Edward FitzGerald was arrested, and Bishop Percy escorted Mrs. Law in her coach to Thomas Street to see the house where he was taken. On the night of the 23rd a general rising had been planned, when the servants were to murder their masters, under cover of darkness, the lamplighters having agreed not to light up the city; but, owing to the vigilance of the Government, the plot was frustrated. Martial law was proclaimed throughout the kingdom, and the insurgents were at all points defeated and slaughtered. Many prisoners were brought to Dublin and hanged.

In the midst of all these horrors the society of Dublin continued its ordinary course, and diverted itself after the manner of the latter-day antediluvians at the time of the Flood. When transmitting the latest gossip to his wife, Bishop Percy wrote:

'I yesterday paid a visit to Lady Londonderry.

She told me Lord Charles FitzRoy was soon to be married to Lady Frances Stewart, and she made the young lady be sent for to me. But the conversation was too delicate for her not to withdraw as soon as she decently could. The marriage is not to take place till Lord Charles has completed a year after his lady's death, which was last August.'

Meanwhile, in the north, Bishop Percy's diocese had been fairly quiet, partly owing to the severity of the Ancient Britons, a Welsh cavalry corps commanded by Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, whose recklessness in running into the enemy's ambuscades had in two years reduced his force from 500 to 100 men, and partly to the exertions of Mr. Brush, Captain of the Dromore Yeomanry, whose loyalty and humanity had reconciled many of the rebels to the Government.

A warm friendship had always subsisted between Bishop Percy and the Roman Catholic priest at Dromore. These two learned men entertained great admiration for each other, and Dr. Percy had given a small piece of ground as a site for a Roman Catholic chapel. Mr. Crane Brush, who was agent to Lord Clanwilliam and to Bishop Percy, had in 1797 raised the Dromore Yeomanry. He shared this liberal and tolerant disposition. One morning, during the process of shaving, he saw from his window the parish priest, Father Mornan, who was an accomplished linguist, beset by a mob at the Cathedral gate, and to his horror found they were proceeding to hang him. 'They suspended him to a high tree,' and he was 'in the last throes of dissolution,' when Mr. Brush rushed out, razor in hand, and cut down the unfortunate priest.

Just as Bishop Percy was congratulating himself on the peaceful state of his diocese, trouble broke out.

On June 12 General Nugent defeated the rebels both at Saintfield and Ballynahinch, and routed them with great slaughter, reducing both places to ashes, after which they fell back on their main body, stationed on a lofty eminence in Lord Moira's demesne, whence they had to be dislodged by means of howitzers. A few shells threw the rebels into confusion, and they were put to flight and driven through Ballynahinch.

One of the clergy of the Dromore diocese was killed by the rebels, the Vicar-General and two others formed a scouting party, and with great bravery got into Ballynahinch, where they collected a good number of muskets and pikes, and superintended the burial of the dead, while others kept a regular guard and sent out patrols. One of their number, though hurried and jaded with three nights on active service, wrote to the Bishop:

'The people place great confidence in my assistance; as far as I can I won't disappoint them, and I hope that the extreme exigency of the moment will excuse me in the eyes of God and men (amongst them your Lordship's foremost) for appearing at times in a military capacity. I am now called on to discharge my duty in my ministerial one.'

A pastoral letter defined the extent to which the clergy were permitted to engage in active service; it concluded:

'Whenever the moment of peril shall arrive, every clergyman must judge for himself in what way he may be most useful; actual fight will often be the last that he will choose, because battle is the particular service for which he will be the least qualified. Should the case be otherwise, he must not decline his share in the common danger.'

After the battle of Ballynahinch, Munro, the rebel general, fled from the field, and was lying in concealment for three days. A woman having given information, he was found hiding in her husband's pigsty. He was taken prisoner, brought to Dromore, and delivered into the custody of Crane Brush. Wet through and nearly dead with fatigue and hunger, Munro found food and warmth in Mr. Brush's dining-room and was supplied with a change of clothes. Double sentries were placed at all the doors and windows, and the unfortunate man was allowed some hours of sleep. Mr. Brush escorted him in the afternoon under a strong guard to Hillsborough, and delivered him up to the general. He was immediately tried by court martial, and three hours afterwards was hanged. The green and white plume that Munro wore in his hat was afterwards presented by Mr. Crane Brush to Dr. Percy.

Meredith Darby, the Bishop's Secretary, wrote from

'Dromore House,
'June 13.

'I yesterday, after the Battle was over at Ballynahinch, went down to see the appearance of the place, which is very near burned down but three houses. It may be truly said what was said of Sodom and Gomorah, that the Smoke of it went up like the smoke of a Furnice. There was one shell, they say, fell on Lord Moira's House. I was round the Rebbles' Camp Ground, where I counted 17 Dead Bodeys. Many told me I was in Danger of being killed by the Rebbles who they expected would return in the night to carry away the Dead. There is forty or fifty Dead Boys lieing there. We brought home two of the Pikes used by the Rebbles, all bloody, for to be put along with

your Lordship's other Curiosities, as I thought it well worth such.

'Dutifully yrs.,
'M. DARBY.'

Mrs. Percy had sent over the butler (Logie) and other servants to await her at Dromore. The Bishop reported their safe arrival in Dublin, whence, after seeing the city and visiting the servants of the Bishop of Elphin, they continued their journey north, each furnished with a printed pass signed by the Lord Mayor, without which it was impossible to quit the city, either by land or by sea.

Logie was at Dromore, when the French were reported to have landed in 1796, and had the ill luck to arrive at the beginning of all these fresh troubles. In the following distracted letter he begs, on behalf of himself and his fellow-servants, to be recalled as soon as possible:

'Dromore House
'12th June.

'My Lord,—I am in the extreme sorry to inform your Lordship with the dredful accounts of this place. Every night I am under arms until fouer o'clock. I have *obaied* the comands of your *Steward* in every respect, but yesterday about three o'clock accounts came that the countrymen had taken the Town and Seat of the Earl of *Moira* and hoisted there flags (they say is *Green*), and nothing more than death staring us in the face of yesterday, and all the lower order of the Town of Dromore fled yesterday, with their wives and young childring as fast as they could fly by the asistince of Horses and Carts. I am sorry to add to this that Mrs. Edwards and Margrat and my Self begs to

be recalled if your Lordship should think proper, as the *Army* is all gone from the Town of Dromore, and not any men now seems suffishent to support that Town, and hear we have but very little assitince from the few men that your Lordship has hear. I have *sene* but Fouer Guns, the account says that 3000 Thousand Rebbles is within ten miles of this house, and the same account says that they are expected every moment.

'My Good Lord, I hope you will, with God Almighty and your Lordship's Good asistence indevor to send for us, as the poor wimen is in a very bad way oin [owing] to the very bad accounts that coms every moment to us; it is not posebel [possible] for us to support this place with the force that we could muster, so that I most sincerely begg of your Lordship to do all you can four us all, as we expect Death powring on us amegetly (immediately). The aprising of the pepeal hear is in the most distressing to me.

'My munies [money] is all gone, and I hope your Lordship will remite me a little for the present, as I have none to go on with. My Lord, I hope your goodness will pardon every Liberty I have taken with your Lordship, but it is in this distressing moments that I luck up to God and your Lordship.

'Three o'clock in the Morning.

'John Logie.'

By degrees Logie's fears were quieted, and he wrote again from Dromore House on June 17:

'My Lord,—I received your Lordship's most kind favour of the 14th very safe, and I am happy, as well as all my poor fellow-servants, to hear that all your Lordship's good Family in England, as well as your

Lordship self, is in good Helth, pray God it long to continue is the iverlasting prayers of all round this house. I should, my Lord, have come to Dublin had there been a place in the Coach, but there was not one, and by what your Lordship said, I did not pursue my gurney. We are very happy to hear that the Rebels is so week in the South. I hope in God that they may never git to so great a head again. To crush them in there infency is the best way, as a good gardner would pluck up a thisle in his garden, so as to hinder it from seeding, and then he will keep his place beautiful. I was, my Lord, at the place where the last Battle was fought, to inspect the reweans [ruins] of that once great little Town, but now in rewens, such a site, the streets having a number of the dead bodys to the amount of 9, and 7 more we saw in Earl Moira's Park; from that place we brought one of their spears for your Lordship's site [sight], and it is a very horrid one.

'My Lord, I am much obliged to your Lordship for your goodness, should anything hapned to me, with regard to my poor Family.

'JOHN LOGIE.'

The following year, when the Bishop was once more established at Dromore, John Logie, after fresh alarms caused by the landing of the French at Killala, having failed to get himself recalled, determined to get himself dismissed. The poor man's dignity had been disturbed by a series of 'unpleasantnesses' that no self-respecting major-domo could be reasonably expected to put up with. On this subject the Bishop wrote to Mrs. Percy:

'My present establishment is reduced by the dismissal of *John Logie*. This paltry fellow had long

been quarrelsome below stairs, and yesterday, when I held an Ordination, as I came home from Church the wind blew so high that we were afraid of the tiles falling upon our heads; after knocking and ringing without the door opening, we at length rang a 2nd time, which offended this strutting puppy Logie, who was eating his *noon-chine*. All the rest of the day, while the company were here, he kept wrangling, and abused me in the most scurrilous language, and I found that he had taken this method to be dismissed. I never discovered him to be guilty of dishonesty, or to be intoxicated with liquor. He was a favourite with his late mistress, Mrs. Murray, and had a great admiration for her. He told the servants that the print which hangs up in my study, over ye chimney, of the beautiful Saccharissa of Waller—with the sweet round face—was very like her. As I shall not give any more dinners, I shall not want a butler. You cannot imagine how well Darby acts behind me, and at the sideboard, where he has assisted at all my great dinners. The rest of my establishment is—Hugh Magenis, my footman—Harrison, Master of my Horse—James Camock, my postilion and groom—Richard McGarry, kitchen man, who puts on livery when I have company—and young Stafford, a smart clever boy to run errands.'

But to return to the state of affairs in Dublin, where Bishop Percy remained throughout the troubles in 1798. He wrote to his wife on June 11:

'All our Bishops are sending away their families to England. Even Lady Camden herself set off for England last night. However, I am in high spirits and have no fear. Last night I drank tea with the Bishop of Cloyne and Mrs. Bennet, and the Bishop of

Clogher was with us. We then walked round Merrion Square, it being almost dark. When we got to Lady Frances Beresford's she was above in her balcony, speaking to 2 ladies, who were at some distance below. What her question was we did not hear, but the answer was so loud it might have been heard across the square—viz.: "Yes, Lady Camden goes off to-night, but Lady Londonderry does not go with her." Who should this communicative lady be but Lady Castlereagh, who was walking on the pavement with Lady Frances Stewart. Judge how the Bishop of Clogher was confounded to hear this disclosure, while at the Castle all were to contradict the report of Lady Camden's going.'

Though no blame was imputed to Lord Camden, he was superseded in the office of Lord Lieutenant by Lord Cornwallis, as the state of the country required a military commander.

'Our new Lord Lieutenant,' wrote Bishop Percy to his wife, 'is unmarried, so the ladies here will have no Drawing Rooms. Perhaps, like Lord Townshend, he may fill up the vacancy from among our Irish belles. Tell Elizabeth to post over! He has not brought a single clergyman over. I suppose none of them will come for fear of the rebels, so our bishopricks will go a-begging. Lord Cornwallis will not be a favourite here, for he is very sober himself and does not push the bottle.'

With a Militia only formidable to their friends, a hostile fleet hovering on the coast, and civil war raging in Wexford and Mayo, Lord Cornwallis declared his position as Lord Lieutenant to be one of 'perfect misery,' and heartily wished himself back in Bengal. The conversation even at his own table always turned

on hanging, burning, and shooting. He wished England could make a union with the whole Irish nation, instead of conciliating only a party in Ireland, and could see the hopelessness of waging war against the Catholics and Presbyterians, who represented nine tenths of the community.

Meanwhile Dr. Percy rode every day through the bustling streets of Dublin, with his umbrella extended and his quiet steed as undisturbed by the flapping of the silk as his master was by the rumours of rebellion. The Bishop was able to report himself to Mrs. Percy as being 'thank God, charming well,' and as the mail coach to the north was guarded by an escort of dragoons, he proposed taking it 'entirely to himself,' and thus retiring in peace and safety to his diocese.

CHAPTER XII

1798–1800

On August 16, 1798, Dr. Percy was able to announce his safe arrival at Dromore House from Dublin. During the two days' journey he observed that the labourers were at work in the fields as usual; the whole country wore an air of peace and plenty, and no traces of the late disturbances remained save three heads that were stuck upon the Market House at Lisburn.

His daughter Elizabeth offered to bear him company at Dromore, but he answered that he was able to live more 'retired and saving' without her, for as all 'the considerable families had sent away their females, he would not be expected to make the figure he must do, if his wife or daughter were with him.'

To compensate for their absence the Bishop had secured an agreeable literary companion by appointing the Rev. Henry Boyd[1] to the living of Rathfriland.

Bishop Percy also looked forward to the society of the General and other officers from the camp at Lisburn, with whom he hoped to partake frequently of venison, supplied from a neighbouring park. He declared that Mrs. Percy was 'quite out of luck' to be absent on these festive occasions, but he assured her that her health would always be drunk by his guests.

Like Bishop Heber, Dr. Percy found that the most pleasing prospects are marred by man, and just as all

[1] The translator of Dante.

seemed to promise peace and quiet a sudden and renewed outbreak of rebellion swept over the land. The Committee of United Irishmen in Paris had assured the French Directory that if a strong French force appeared on the coast of Ireland the whole country would rise to shake off the hated British rule.

The French intended to land forces simultaneously at various points, and by distracting the attention of the Irish Government to facilitate a general rising. But the energetic measures taken for the arrest of the rebel leaders in the meanwhile put an end to the rebellion.

A small expedition put to sea on August 4 from La Rochelle, but only the vanguard, consisting of two frigates of forty-four guns, and one of thirty-eight, reached its destination. The main force was happily intercepted by Sir John Warren, the sound of whose guns was heard from the mountains of Mourne, a distance of 120 miles. The vanguard was eighteen days at sea, and after beating up three days against a north wind, by means of flying English colours it was brought to anchor on August 22 in the Bay of Killala, in county Mayo, instead of landing in Donegal, as was intended.

General Humbert, who had served under General Hoche in the expedition to Bantry Bay in December 1796, disembarked with a force of 1030 men and 70 officers. Urged on by the impatience of Napper Tandy he had sailed without orders, and found himself unsupported. He established his headquarters at the Castle of Killala, then occupied by the Bishop of the diocese and his family.

Dr. Stock had recently been appointed to the see of Killala, to which it was at one time contemplated to

send Dr. Percy. He was an excellent scholar, and noted for his courtesy and tact, and held that in the literary world, as elsewhere, 'soft words do much'; he wished that none else had ever, in the heat of debate, fallen from the lips of the learned. He was therefore eminently suited to fill a difficult position. On this memorable day two of his sons put off to sea in a fishing-boat to inspect what they believed to be an English man-of-war. One of them was immediately seized as an interpreter, and the other escaped, though he was not able to assure his family of his safety until he appeared some weeks later among their rescuers.

That the natives were in league with the enemy was shown by the fact that a rumour of the intended invasion had reached the castle a few days previously through a servant who was married to one of the townspeople.

The unusual appearance of the enemies' ships was noticed by an officer of yeomanry, who kept his corps under arms at the castle, together with twenty militiamen, thus forming a garrison of fifty men all told.

When a message came that the French had landed, and with a force of 300 men were within a mile of the town, this gallant little band was drawn up in front of the castle determined to fight. They were, however, beaten down by superior numbers and fled, while their two officers were taken prisoners. The French marched triumphantly into the courtyard demanding to see 'Monsieur l'Evêque,' who was pacing up and down his garden to '*arm* his mind,' as an Irishman tells us, while the sounds of the volleys were singing in his ears. His knowledge of the French tongue enabled him to understand General Humbert's polite apologies for the necessity of the invasion and his assurance of

its success. As a mark of confidence he offered the Bishop a place in the Directory of the Province of Connaught, which honour his Lordship acknowledged with a profound bow, but when pressed to take the oath, he replied with a smile that he had already taken too many to his own sovereign. He was asked if he considered it treason to act under a foreign Power for the common safety, and answered that he was no lawyer, but as the laws of England were reasonable they could not be incompatible with those of self-preservation.

Nineteen prisoners were secured in the drawing-room of the castle, but Colonel Charost, who with two officers was left in command of the garrison, while General Humbert proceeded to conquer the country, assured his reluctant host that the attics should be regarded as sacred to himself and his wife, with their household of eleven children and thirteen servants. This promise was faithfully kept, and for the twenty-three days that the enemy were in possession no Frenchman ever ascended beyond the first floor, except to announce the news of their victory at Castlebar, which did not convey much satisfaction to their entertainers. Though unmolested by the French, the attics were invaded by the panic-stricken inhabitants of Killala, who fled to the castle for safety, crowding every corner of the staircase, and forcing their way into every room. The bedridden recovered strength to climb to the top of the house, and the building resounded with the loquacity of the French below, and the shrieks and groans of the fugitives above, as they drew consolation from the whisky bottle. Some of the refugees attempted to celebrate a wake on the floor of the granary, and lit a fire with nothing under the burning turf but wooden boards. Colonel Charost called for the Bishop's butler and desired

him to secure the silver in his pantry, and when he found his soldiers inclined to plunder, declared 'that he was a *chef de brigade*, but would never be a *chef de brigands*.'

The Bishop's well-stocked larder and cellar and all his cattle and crops were consumed by the invaders before anything belonging to the poor inhabitants of the town was touched. Thirty tons of coals were required to keep the kitchen fire going for one month, and repeated conflagrations resulted from over-use of the grate. The stables furnished his guests with nine horses, and in three days the visit had cost the Bishop 600*l*. Nevertheless he testified to the intelligence, activity, temperance, and obedience of the invaders. Half of them had served in Italy under Napoleon, and the rest were seasoned and well-disciplined veterans from the army of the Rhine, to whom the invasion of Ireland must have appeared mere child's play. Bread and potatoes sufficed for their food, while water quenched their thirst, and they would sleep in the streets with no covering but their uniforms. When the Bishop objected to supplying the necessary cars and boats, the General overcame his scruples by marching him through the town with a corporal's guard, and threatening to transport him to France.

After the victory gained over the English at Castlebar, where the French killed and took prisoners 800 of our troops, and captured ten pieces of cannon, General Humbert returned in triumph to the Castle of Killala. With a Frenchman's love of effect he made his entry in a curricle drawn by two handsome horses, and seated on his left hand, as a captive of war, a corpulent British officer, in full uniform, whom he had surprised in bed. Hundreds of the country people now joined the enemy,

and a green flag with the inscription 'Erin go bragh' floated over the castle. One thousand natives were equipped with French uniforms, and after the supply of clothing failed, arms were served out to another 5500 men. The French force was also joined by deserters from the Longford and Kilkenny Militias, who marched into the courtyard of the castle with their coats turned, and then exchanged them for the blue uniform of France. To console the Bishop, the commissary made him a present of the discarded uniforms, which he put aside, confident that they would soon be again required.

Though the Catholics objected to the Protestants being armed, Colonel Charost distributed weapons to all, irrespective of creed. At first the recruits were trusted with ball as well as powder, but their ignorance in handling their ammunition nearly cost General Humbert his life, and the Bishop and Colonel Charost were obliged to bury a quantity of gunpowder in the garden to prevent mischief.

When the unkempt, ragged mountaineers were washed, powdered, and shod, General Humbert turned to the Bishop and said triumphantly, 'See, these poor fellows are made of the same stuff as ourselves.' The French soldiers dressed the country clowns with an air of good-humoured contempt, and were amused when, in their haste to be made fine, they cast off their old clothes before the new ones could be provided. Their joy was complete when gaudy helmets of imitation leopard's skin were thumped down on their heads by the strong fists of a marine officer, who stood upon a powder-barrel, and undertook to make the helmet fit any skull, regardless of whether they could ever be removed.

These transformations took place in the castle-yard in the evening, where, amid the darkness, clamour, and confusion of three languages, the Bishop tried to pacify all parties. In the absence of the main force under Humbert the three brave French officers managed, by showing a bold front, to cow the unruly mob of natives that surrounded them. Charost was greatly shocked by the state of the country, and declared that no consideration should prevail on him again to trust himself to such a horde of savages as the inhabitants of this *pays barbare*.

At last some form of civil government was found necessary, and the country was thrown into departments, with a magistrate and a guard of twenty armed men in charge of each. Bishop Stock and Colonel Charost being men of large minds and honest purpose soon came to a complete understanding, and a friendship was established between them. His military duties, the French officer declared, had left him no time to think, but though his religion was 'still to seek,' he had constantly endeavoured to do all he could for the good of his fellow-men. He courteously excused himself from studying three books offered to him by the Bishop, but tried to enforce quiet on Sundays during the time of Church service. As long as the well-disciplined French troops remained, the loyalists felt perfectly secure, and the rebels accused their allies of siding with the enemy. On his return to France, General Humbert wrote a letter of thanks to Bishop Stock for his kindness and hospitality to himself and Colonel Charost.

The battle in which the invaders proved victorious was known as 'the races of Castlebar.' General Hely-Hutchinson, who was in command of about 1500 men, had previously chosen the ground on which he

intended to resist the attack of the French forces, and on the night of the 26th he was joined by General Lake. Early next morning the French arrived in three columns of about 800 men each, which included many of their Irish allies and two curricle guns. They advanced rapidly, firing their cannon obliquely on all parts of the English line, which was returned with effect by our artillery. The enemy then began a rapid charge with the bayonet in very loose order. At this moment the Galway Volunteers and the Kilkenny and Longford Militia ran away. Lord Ormonde begged and prayed, upbraided and swore at his men ; he ran two of them through the body, and finally burst into tears, but all in vain. Lord Granard likewise exerted himself as unsuccessfully with the Longfords.

Both of these apparently fine regiments were disaffected, and many of the privates were sworn United Irishmen. The Longfords, though rallied in a churchyard at Castlebar which was protected by a wall, could not be persuaded to make a stand.

The Lord Lieutenant was meanwhile advancing with a strong force to meet the invaders. The loyalty of a Catholic priest furnished him with a list of their proposed halting-places, and the failure of General Humbert's landlady at Coolooney to awaken the French Commander at the appointed hour enabled Lord Cornwallis finally to overtake and defeat the French force on the road to Dublin.

During this crisis the capital remained quiet, and such reticence was maintained by the officials that in the castle-yard everything was to be heard except truth. On September 6 Oliver Bond, one of the most prominent of the rebel leaders confined in Dublin, died

suddenly; it was reported that he had been poisoned by his fellow-prisoners in consequence of his determination to fulfil his engagements with Government; but the more probable cause was that struggle between inward anguish and outward calm which, as Dr. Erasmus Darwin had pointed out, 'more often tears up the best constitutions than is always perceived.'

After the French invasion there was a comparative lull in the storm of insurrection, during which time Bishop Percy was able to plant his groves and beautify his surroundings. As his correspondent, William Jessop, wrote, in a poetical 'Essay on Gardens,' which he dedicated to Percy:

> Hibernia's children, once a fiery brood,
> Among life's pleasures rank'd the deadly feud;
> Rous'd by the Geraldine or Butler pride,
> They bled for pastime, and for frolic died.

This strife had continued at intervals ever since, but now all was to be changed:

> Suffice it to have pass'd six frantic years;
> Now range your trees, and not your volunteers.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> On bogs reclaim'd shall dancing harvests play,
> And duellists and Whiteboys melt away.

The absentees, he declared, had caused the troubles. Such men

> Renounce the lands that Heav'n ordained their lot,
> To deck some rented and far distant spot.

Whereas

> 'Tis duty's law thy fondness to bestowe
> Upon the soil from whence thy fortunes flow.

That a Bishop should trouble himself to plant, except upon his own patrimony, Jessop applauded, though he believed it to be without precedent. But the ideas of the two men on the art of landscape gardening were so entirely opposed that a comparison of their aims and methods puts before us the two extremes of eighteenth-century taste. One shows us the ideal garden, that no other age has so well conceived, and the other the tea-garden, or, as Percy himself calls it, the 'cheese-cake house,' with its sham ornaments and artfully contrived illusions.

To begin with, Jessop conveyed a useful hint to his compatriots, whose ideas were always on a more liberal scale than their resources :

> When taste shall urge in planting to excel,
> The sources of your purse consider well.

He recommends the planter to study the capabilities of his ground :

> Suit but his taste, it matters not how thrift
> Thine off'ring limit, he accepts the gift.

'My health,' wrote Percy, 'I attribute (under Heaven) to the regular life I lead and to my being abroad every day for many hours amongst my workmen, dressing and improving my walks. I have amused my hours of solitude in making many new paths through the Plantations which now are grown in many parts higher than my head. The Grove is divided into such a variety of winding walks that Darby measured them all yesterday and found that we might walk above an English mile without going out of that Grove, or setting foot twice in the same Path.'

Of these tortuous paths wrote Jessop:

> Long did the mandates of the gard'ner's line
> Our tedious walks to frigid lines confine;
> Rectangles form'd the standard of delight;
> To err from these was heresy downright.
> This vanish'd, and a nobler style was found,
> And winding paths were trac'd through ev'ry ground.
> But this, if carried to a wild excess,
> Becomes a whim, ridiculous, no less.
> Why must our walks eternal twistings take,
> Convuls'd and writhing, like a wounded snake?
> Because, pronounces gravely Fashion new,
> Your only line of beauty is the screw.
> But is this nature? Who that is not blind,
> Or by much wine to stagg'ring gait inclin'd,
> Quits forward steps to take a sidling bent,
> Unless obstruction his advance prevent?
> Whene'er your walks from straight direction swerve,
> Some semblance of necessity preserve;
> Let rocks, trees, steeps, a seeming check produce,
> To mask our wand'ring with a fair excuse;
> If no such plausible pretext be found,
> We titter, as we wriggle round and round.

Percy imported, among other objects of interest, one of the columns of the Giant's Causeway, nine feet high, with six sides, which he placed in a vista of his woodland groves 'with most striking effect.'

This style of decoration Jessop condemned:

> From single columns Taste withholds her praise,
> Though not unknown to Rome's Augustan days;
> Incumbent weights were columns meant to bear;
> Who wants their succour to support the air?

'I am much amused in improving my Groves,' wrote Percy. 'The glen is a perfect paradise, and is decorated with three beautiful urns and an obelisk, painted by Mr. Robinson. From distant points of view they have the happiest effect.'

To Jessop's mind every urn should recall a memory:

> The mournful urn with pious fondness raise,
> Some precious friend's departed worth to praise.
> Let no fantastic monuments obtrude,
> Toys, that were never with a tear bedew'd;
> Still less for dog, or bird, construct a tomb;
> Let not thy whim to jest with death presume.

Percy's painted urns did not perpetuate the memory of any departed friend, though he would have thought it no 'jest with death' to dedicate them to his dogs, who were the beloved and faithful companions of his solitude. 'There never was,' he declared, 'so lively and bustling a little animal as Blouze's puppy. Its spots, that appear quite black at a distance, have in reality a tincture of brown.' The little creature, who followed his master all over the grove, had been called Nero, then Nelson, then Namby, and finally Nero again, in compliance with contradictory instructions from Mrs. and Miss Percy, until the owner wrote 'It is to be hoped you will now be satisfied at last.'

Nero eventually qualified for a funeral urn, for some years later the Bishop received the following laconic announcement of his decease in a letter from his secretary Meredith Darby:

'Poor old Neorow is dead, the other two little dogs is very well. We have shot Black Jack.'

What a world of tragedy in a few words!

But to return to the Bishop's groves.

'The obelisk,' wrote Percy, 'is embellished by two long lines of trees, which conduct the eye to it almost the whole length of the glen, so that a mile off you would think it 50 feet high.'

Jessop wrote:

> Deign not to borrow from the sons of Nile
> The tall, lank obelisk's unmeaning pile.

He preferred statues of Ireland's most prominent living poets, such as Sterling and Boyd.

But though Percy's urns and obelisks might be devoid of association with the departed or the great, at any rate he perpetuated the memory of the still living Mrs. Percy. He wrote to her:

'I have lately improved one of the shady recesses in my glen by a very well painted bust of yourself, copied from one of your little shades [silhouettes]. As it cannot be approached, it has all the effect of Marble.'

The position of this effigy Jessop would not have condemned, for statues, he declared, should be encircled with the social shade of trees:

> If perched all lonely on a naked plain,
> A criminal impal'd our eyes 'twill strike,
> Or, at the best, an infant's doll be like;
> But, duly fix'd, importance it acquires,
> And many a pleasing phantasy inspires.

Happily Jessop never visited Dromore, for his good taste would have been offended by the painted representation of Mrs. Percy, masquerading by day as marble, and turned by night into an 'enchanted statue.' While no doubt admiring the Bishop's constancy, he would, in hearty accord with the spirit of the future Ruskin, have condemned all shams as inartistic.

No man can reckon at all times on the unqualified appreciation of his own household; when Percy's daughter Elizabeth ventured to doubt the wonders of his grove, he wrote severely:

'Elizabeth seems to think the description of the improvements at Dromore House and in ye Plantations exaggerated. No written account can do them justice. The illuminations of the enchanted statue suddenly

turn it by night into a brilliant Cross, composed of what appear to be little Stars. This arrangement was the result of an accidental discovery, which has all the effect of magic, and has escaped the detection of the most acute scientific spectator, and, though a mere illusion, has the appearance of reality. These petty amusements were my refuge during your absence. Such an exhibition at any "Cheese Cake House" near London would make the possessor's fortune.'

Jessop bade his readers:

> China's grotesque absurdities forbear;
> The tasteful loathes, where fools admiring stare;
> They must possess, on scale pygmean drawn,
> A stream, bridge, lake, rock, shrubb'ry, grove, and lawn.

Nor did he care for the style of the Ancients:

> Bright as in taste the Greeks and Romans shone
> A graceful gard'ning was to neither known.
> . . . . . .
> Pliny, with all his wealth and all his wit,
> Was just for aldermen a gard'ner fit.

The art of gardening belonged to a still older civilisation:

> China first knew, and knew from earliest time,
> A style of gard'ning beauteous and sublime;
> With sweet disorder trac'd its bold designs
> And scorn'd the sway of compasses and lines.
> Gardens are pictures of an ampler size;
> View their whole compass with a painter's eyes.

In gardening, as in every other art, simplicity is the highest form of expression:

> Adopt each grace that naked nature yields,
> And let fields teach thee to adorn thy fields.

'I am endeavouring to divert my solitude,' continues Percy, 'by opening little vistas and dressing up the various scenes in my plantations. I have lately converted the trees near the entrance gate into a scene of uncommon beauty. I have opened a series of small *vistas*, every one of which presents some beautiful little landscape, viz. the church—the old ruined castle—the winding of the river—and the distant mountains. And I have placed little seats to command each of them.'

Fortunately from the grounds of Dromore House all the distant objects of interest suggested by Jessop as essential to the landscape might be seen. There was the church :

> At spire and steeple with delight we gaze.

And there were the ruins of Dromore Castle :

> The charms of ruins can I leave unsung ?
> The aged here are fairer than the young ;
> Oft saw these walls the conflict of our sires,
> And val'rous hardihood of knights and squires.

Had these ruins not existed, we shudder to think that Percy might have been tempted to create them ; for

> If true antiquities thy site deny,
> Their place with other charms let taste supply.
> It moves disgust, in gardens as in life,
> When vain pretensions are with truth at strife.

The river Lagan was also a great feature in the landscape :

> Midst all the forms that water's aspect wears,
> Surpassing charms the rolling river shares.
> Its brisk activity, its waving line,
> Its lulling sound, transcendent sweets combine.

Jessop's ideal garden was to foreshadow the repose of Paradise:

> Some dark alcoves, immers'd in shades remote,
> To calm repose and silence deep devote.

And in his garden he hoped at last to rest his worn-out frame:

> Here where the shades their verdant curtains close,
> Spread the soft pillows for thy last repose.

But in the meanwhile repose was to consist in well-earned relaxation after strenuous effort:

> Through all besides, activity should reign.
> . . . . . .
> If absent this, the whole insipid grows;
> Careless we saunter or lethargic doze.
> Thus let thy scenes with animation glow,
> Let buoyant swans along thy currents row,
> Let steeds, and kine, and chief the fleecy race,
> From ev'ry field a vacant dullness chase.
> The peacock strutting in magnific state,
> The pigeon faithful to its constant mate,
> The ducks, the geese, the turkeys swarm around,
> And urge thy bounty with a craving sound.

Though he loved to be surrounded with animal life, Jessop would probably not have placed his pigsty immediately under his dining-room window. But Percy, while partaking of his solitary meals, liked to watch the gambols of his young pigs, who later on, in another capacity, were admitted to a place at his table, or rather on it.

During his residence at Dromore, Bishop Percy took a kindly interest in his neighbours' concerns, and on one occasion wrote to his wife:

'The two unmarried Miss Stothards have gone beside themselves on account of the unfortunate state

A VISTA IN THE GROVES AT DROMORE.
Bishop Percy feeding his swans.

of their affairs. Their Mother is a shocking ill-tempered old crone, but I have renewed all the leases for their benefit.'

Sometimes domestic misfortunes are recorded. When the kitchen chimney was on fire a loaded blunderbuss was discharged up it, that not only broke the windows, but impaired Percy's power of hearing for several days.

During her prolonged absence, Mrs. Percy was naturally very anxious concerning the welfare of her husband, and in answer to her inquiries, he wrote :

'I am much obliged for your tender concern for me. Your fears are needless. If necessary I could ship over to Scotland. You hope I do not loiter amongst my workmen in this severe weather ; that I have a fire in my bedroom, and have not any cough. I never was better in my life ; I have left off the perpetual blister on my head and the flannel waistcoat under my shirt, and have never had a fire in my bedroom.

'To my being a water-drinker till I was 37 years of age, and abstaining from suppers, I attribute my health, activity, and spirits. I send you a few hairs which have escaped the razor by growing behind my ears. They are exactly of the same colour as they were when I was 10 years old. Ever since I have worn a wig. I cannot discover one grey hair, though I want but one month of 70. Had I always worn my own hair, I suppose it would all have been of this colour. As you may never see so much of my hair again, let this be kept as a curiosity.'

While congratulating himself on his youth, Bishop Percy advised his wife, who was only two years younger than himself, to find among his books a good large Bible, in two volumes quarto, which might suit her eyes.

Every family anniversary was duly celebrated at Dromore House. When commemorating Mrs. Isted's wedding day the Bishop wrote to his wife:

'Whilst all our Servants are giving a Ball below, and spending the evening in grand Gala on this festive occasion, I take up my pen to pass the moments with you and your happy fireside, while dear little Ambrose is playing about you, turning over the leaves of some book, and pointing out his round O. You made me particularly happy by your most affectionate letter. The slightest writing from your own dear hand always gives me superior pleasure, yet I know how much it fatigues you to write.'

'I kept your birthday on Sunday,' he wrote on another occasion, 'by a little regale to the servants, but the solemnity of the day obliged me to do it with a proper reserve. However, I promised them a dance on Ambrose's birthday, and it was celebrated with all due splendour by the High Life below stairs.

'As I do not exactly know your age, you need not be afraid of my having revealed that secret, so disagreeable to you young ladies. As to my own age, everyone pronounces it to be 55.'

On April 24, 1799, the Bishop wrote from Dromore House:

'My Dearest Life,—This being the anniversary of our wedding, as well as my birthday, I address my congratulations to you, who have contributed so much to the happiness of my life. When I look back on the humble prospects with which we entered into the marriage state 40 years ago, and reflect on our present splendour and comforts, what fervent gratitude ought we to feel.

'For your love and tenderness, and your prudence and economy in our earlier years, and for denying yourself the pleasures of the capital, Heaven now rewards you by enabling you to enjoy every reasonable indulgence, and grants us both perfect health. This day I complete the year which is considered as the term of human life, and yet I can scarce discover any abatement of my powers from what they were the day you made me the happiest of men by presenting to my heart the loveliest of women.

'God grant such length and enjoyment of life may be distinguished by superior usefulness, and that we may long enjoy each other.

'In honour of this day I have invited the officers at Lurgan, though I shall not tell them the particulars relating to it.

'With my tenderest regards for all, I remain ever, my best beloved,

'Your most affectionate and faithful,

'THOMAS DROMORE.'

Though there were still many concealed traitors in the north, Bishop Percy decided, early in December 1798, that the improved state of the country warranted his preaching a thanksgiving sermon. Many dissenters, who had shown themselves very loyal yeomen of the Dromore Corps, were present on this occasion, and some joined the Church permanently. The congregation was the largest that had ever assembled in Dromore Cathedral; and though the day was cold, the preacher was so carried away by his subject that the heat of the building appeared oppressive, and he was obliged to have all the doors and windows thrown open as in summer. At the conclusion of his

discourse the Bishop was able to congratulate himself on not having 'weakened the loyalty of his hearers.'

The French fleet was still believed to be hovering round our coasts, and Mrs. Percy reported that some of their ships had been seen from Brighton, and had caused much alarm. In the meanwhile 'great ferments' were rising at the prospect of a Union with Britain, which Percy believed would be for the good of Ireland if it could be effected without much discontent, but he foresaw that whoever attempted to pass the measure would have great difficulties, as the Dublin mob were rending the skies with shouts against it.

On this subject the Bishop of Elphin wrote to Bishop Percy:

'Most of the Irish Members of Parliament are against the union, not because it will be the ruin of the country, but of jobbing. Many lawyers too are against it, because they think a seat in Parliament a readier road to wealth and promotion than professional labour. I wish a Union because the poor will then be governed by laws, and not by tyrannical landlords. They will have English wages, English usages, and the protection of the British Constitution.'

Much as Dr. Percy would have liked to join his family at Ecton, he considered 'it would be very indecent' to be absent from Parliament when a subject of such great national concern as the Union was under consideration; he was therefore obliged to defer the pleasure of availing himself of Lord Egremont's invitation to rummage among the old papers at Petworth, which to him 'would be the most agreeable treat in the world.'

On January 21, 1799, he wrote to his wife from Dromore House:

'Lest you should be alarmed at any accounts you may hear of dangerous riots in Dublin, which are expected to break out to-morrow at the meeting of Parliament, on account of the motion for the Union, I write to inform you that although I had fixed everything for my departure, yet Providence has so ordered it that I am confined with a violent cold, which would render it very dangerous to stir. It is very remarkable that I should have escaped colds all this winter till now, when probably it may be a preservative from worse evils. I hope to attend in person whenever the great question is decided, and by that time no doubt the Government will have taken proper measures to secure public safety.'

Though a well-timed cold debarred the Bishop from braving the fury of the Dublin mob, his serenity was somewhat disturbed by local contentions. For Lord Castlereagh was struggling to get the county of Down to join in an address for the Union, while Lord Downshire, whose recently purchased boroughs would be rendered valueless, as vigorously opposed the measure.

Dr. Percy wrote to his wife from Dromore House:

'I gave a dinner to Lord Downshire, which the cook dressed very creditably. The next day I was invited to meet him, and though I had the day before made him an expensive dinner, yet because he knows my sentiments with respect to the *Union* he behaved with the most disobliging shyness. At the time of the races Lord and Lady Londonderry, and Lord Castlereagh, all slept at Lord Downshire's, who, notwithstanding, did in the stand say the most insulting things before them against all that promoted the Union, which they quietly pocketed. He said that the 70,000 troops

which England sent over for our protection during the Rebellion were to ram the Union down the throats of the Irish nation.'

The Lord Lieutenant, in his progress through Armagh and Belfast in October 1799, wisely avoided the county of Down, but Bishop Percy being convinced that the Union would strengthen both Church and State, drew up and forwarded to His Excellency an address which he said 'he ought to receive very gratefully, for neither Lord Gosford nor Lord Londonderry whose houses he visited had weight enough to procure him such, if their lives had depended on it.'

'I would not go after him to Lord Londonderry's,' wrote the Bishop, 'but sent it by one of my clergy, who says it was very graciously received, as it ought to be, but in the answer there is an omission of thanks to myself, which I am willing to attribute to the inadvertence of the Secretary in the hurry of writing.'

On February 4, 1800, Bishop Percy arrived in Dublin accompanied by his nephew.

Though great agitation prevailed against the Union, owing to the vigilance of Government, and a strong contingent of British troops, aided by an excellent police force, the town appeared to be perfectly safe and quiet. He reached Dublin two days before the Bill for the Union was finally passed by the Commons.

To reassure Mrs. Percy he wrote:

'We are well guarded from the rabble, but the debates are carried to such excess as to produce nothing but duels. Mr. Grattan and Mr. Corry went out, the latter is shot in the wrist, but I hope not dangerously. Other rencounters are mentioned—one in which ye Earl of Ormonde, and another in which Lord Cole have been engaged. But I hope the 2 last

are not true. The Bishop of Elphin says I look ten years younger than when he saw me last.'

Since the threatened invasion of the French in 1796, when the three sons of Lord Clanwilliam were among the defenders of Dromore House, the attachment of Pierce Meade to Elizabeth Percy had remained steadfast in spite of long separation. He had in the interval occasionally visited Mr. and Mrs. Isted at Ecton, and had also joined Mrs. and Miss Percy at Tunbridge, where 'the fair Elizabeth might be seen tripping about on the Pantiles, with ruddy cheeks glowing with health.' But in addition to the usual want of means the young people had to face considerable opposition.

Dr. Percy did not appear to favour the marriage, and after the manner of the ideal domestic ruler set before us in 'The Vicar of Wakefield' and 'Pride and Prejudice,' he endeavoured to moderate the flighty imaginations of his womenkind. When his daughter, Mrs. Isted, furtively approached the subject with hints and half confidences, he wrote severely :

'If Mrs. Isted really wishes to serve Pierce Meade, she must not keep me in suspense, but tell me without reserve her whole drift in her next. Let her remember the poem,

> They that depend upon another must
> Oblige his honour with a boundless trust.

I recollect something like this in Waller's poems, and it is an infallible maxim ; so let her observe it.'

The Bishop was intolerant of any schemes but his own, and wisely discouraged any attempt at them in his family. In answer to a further suggestion that the young man should visit him at Dromore, he wrote :

'Let me thank Mrs. Isted for counselling Pierce

Meade to defer coming hither. When it is convenient and desirable for me to have him, I will invite him down; till then I wish his visit may be postponed.'

Of Pierce Meade's prospects the Bishop wrote, 'I understand his fortune will be £3000 at his father's death, but until then he can expect nothing.' As the present income of this prospective capital appeared insufficient to maintain a wife, Dr. Percy declared emphatically that no union could possibly take place until Pierce Meade, who had taken Holy Orders, obtained preferment, and begged the subject might not again be mentioned to him, 'lest ye render it perfectly disagreeable and it end in a total final *prevention*.'

The Bishop concludes by exhorting Elizabeth 'to have patience and trust in Providence,' that unfailing *last* resource. 'Has it come to that?' exclaimed an excellent man, who in the excitement of a shipwreck let fall his unguarded sentiments. The marriage finally took place in 1801.

Pierce Meade's descent appealed strongly to Bishop Percy's love of genealogies, as the following letter addressed to Dr. Marlow, President of St. John's College, Oxford, shows:

'I solicit your attention to the position of my young friend Mr. Meade. It seems that your Society does not allow admission to the Common Room to his order of undergraduates, though it is granted to noblemen. I submit to you whether it will be for the credit of your College to exclude a live descendant of the great patron of your University, Lord Chancellor Clarendon. For Lady Clanwilliam's grandmother was no other than Lady Theodosia Hyde, cousin-german of Queen Mary and Queen Anne. As we live in times so critical that everything seems to threaten old establishments,

I trust you will exert your influence to prevent such a termination of the business as may lead to public censure. For the connections of the family are persons of strong feeling, and probably will not quietly submit to what they consider a deliberate injustice, and even the Clarendon Press may be employed in a statement of the case. I would rather wish to conciliate than to irritate.'

Lady Clanwilliam was a kind-hearted woman, though possessed of great originality and force of character. Those who visit the surroundings of Bishop Percy at Dromore will be shown at Gill Hall—the now forsaken home of Lord Clanwilliam—the oak-panelled hall where his ancestress 'Theodosia' sat working, surrounded by her maid-servants, whose labours were conducted under the immediate eye of their mistress. A room leading out of this hall was the scene of the famous Beresford ghost story, and the furniture still shows marks of the burning fingers of the spectre, whose touch injured the wrist of the lady whom he warned of a future existence in a manner that necessitated her ever after concealing her injuries under a band of black velvet.

Gill Hall is now only inhabited during the winter months by Lord Clanwilliam's agent, Mr. Brush and his family, the descendant of Mr. Crane Brush, who gallantly raised and commanded the Dromore Yeomanry through the troublous times of the rebellion.

In the haunted apartment we are shown a relic that speaks of the happy relationship of the Meade and Percy families. Here hangs the dressing-gown of Bishop Percy's only son Henry, who died at Marseilles, where Lady Clanwilliam happened to be staying at the moment. She always retained a pleasant memory

of the young man's 'engaging person and elegant manners.'

In 1805 a warmly contested election took place in County Down, when Colonel the Honourable John Meade commenced an active canvass in opposition to Lord Castlereagh, who had represented the county for fifteen years. The late member considered his seat so safe that he was quite content to pass his time between the India House and Downing Street, varied by occasional visits to East Sheen, without troubling himself to take a journey to Downpatrick. It was alleged that Lord Londonderry had 'succeeded to a large share of the honours torn from the brow of Lord Downshire in consequence of his opposition to the Union.' Feeling ran high, and there was some hard hitting on both sides. The partisans of the Hills and Meades declared that 'India was ransacked to support the tottering fabric of the quick-reared and crazy house of Londonderry, the source of whose ancestry, like that of the Nile, was lost in a bog.' The support of the electors in County Down, it was asserted, had been purchased by cadetships, that had enabled their sons to enrich themselves in India. Lord Castlereagh was accused of having swallowed the Irish Parliament in one day, which he digested like an ostrich; and though it was declared that nothing short of an earthquake could remove him from the Cabinet, his constituents, headed by Lady Downshire and 10,000 of her son's tenants, determined to unseat him for the county of Down. Lord Downshire had resisted British influence, promoted Irish industries, and all that he considered tended to the public weal. The Meades threw in their lot with him, and their followers vowed that 'the Hills of Down and the

flowery Meades of Green Iveagh should witness the abasement of the proud upstart.' The word Meade, they declared, signified a mixture of two of the purest liquids, honey and water, and as such was symbolic of their candidate. Their opponents, by a well-timed reference to Johnson's Dictionary, discovered that 'Meade' is a mawkish liquor made of honey (like the Colonel's promises) and of water (cold and weak as his performances). Mum is also defined as a torpid and stupefying sort of ale, and Colonel Meade, who had received five wounds while serving with Sir Ralph Abercromby in Egypt and had seen his brother killed at his side, was not eloquent.

'Sam Johnson, though great and renowned is his name,
Gave different meanings to words of the same;
Were he living last week, and to Down he had come,
He'd learn from the Colonel that Meade is but Mum.

That the Colonel is valiant we freely admit,
But like Orator Mum in the Senate he'd sit;
In Egypt, promotion he gain'd and renown,
But a mummy from Egypt 's no member for Down.'

Lord Castlereagh retired when he found the election was going against him, and Colonel Meade was elected in the room of the Irish Secretary of State, the Minister of the Union, and the friend of Pitt. As a supporter of the Union, and a connection of the Meades, Bishop Percy's sympathies must have been divided.

But to return to the events of 1800. On April 22 the Bishop was at last able to inform Mrs. Percy that he had safely landed in England, but he had no sooner reached Brighton than he found himself described as an absentee in a resolution passed at a meeting in his diocese to procure relief for the poor.

He wrote in reply:

'If the clause in the Resolution which seems to confine it to "*Gentlemen*" that "*are absent from the country*" is applied to me, I must regard it as a very ungrateful return for my residence in your neighbourhood during two years of the greatest danger to which the Kingdom was ever exposed. I had leave from the Lord Lieutenant to have gone to England to my family, whom I had sent away by the advice of the Commander in Chief. I excused myself from attending Parliament during the session of 1799, and renounced the charms of Society in Dublin, that I might remain in steady attendance at Dromore.

'My English rents enabled me to instruct my agent, Mr. Brush, out of £190 10*s*. which he had received of my Irish rents, to apply £90 to buy oatmeal for the poor of Dromore, and to dispose of all the remainder, and more, in wages to labourers, or in other expenditures at Dromore House, where I have always laid out a great part of my income in plantations and improvements, to the advantage of the laborious poor and the ornament of the country. Nor can I expect to be repaid by a successor in proportion to the sums I have expended since I became Bishop.'

CHAPTER XIII

1801–1808

'Do not make a Union with us, sir,' said Dr. Johnson, speaking candidly to an Irishman, 'we should unite with you only to rob you. We should have robbed the Scotch, if they had had anything of which we could rob them.' But, far from allowing themselves to be robbed, the Scotch quietly got the better of their neighbours, and in literature, politics, manufacture, and sport showed themselves fully equal, not only to spoiling their task-masters, but also to ruling them.

Though Irishmen in foreign lands have shown the same spirit, in their own they appear still enervated by brooding over the injuries that should have taught them to put forth their whole strength.

Under the English Government formed in 1801 by Mr. Addington, Lord Hardwicke was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in succession to Lord Cornwallis, and on him and on Mr. Abbot, the Chief Secretary, devolved the responsibility of bringing into force the Act of the Union. Through the kindness of Lord Colchester, we are enabled by means of Mr. Abbot's private papers to obtain an insight into the state of affairs that led to the rebellion of 1803.

On his arrival in Dublin Mr. Abbot received an anonymous letter, pointing out the chief obstacles to any improvement in the commerce and revenues of

Ireland. It stated that the misfortunes of the country arose from its system of politics, which was entirely one of jobbery. Its leading men descended to the lowest depths of peculation for their personal advancement; seats in Parliament fetched high prices, and were regarded as a source of wealth and honour; the right of making laws was valued for the power it bestowed of breaking them.

The titles of the men who by the official list were ostensibly filling laborious offices as members of the public boards might lead the uninitiated to think highly of the disinterestedness of the upper classes; but, instead of patriots, truth showed them to be political jobbers, who only sought for emoluments and opportunities of perverting justice, eluding the laws of the country, and enriching themselves, their friends, families and dependants with the spoils.

Electioneering was a favourite speculation, and a seat at a public board a 'noble vantage-ground' from which to play off the machine of bribery and influence; as battles are sometimes lost and won in a Cabinet, so in the narrow precincts of a board-room polls were held and members returned to Parliament for distant counties. The transactions of these petty governors showed that secret agreements were made between them to play into each other's hands.

Though the Union, which was declared by Lord Castlereagh to be 'an attempt to buy up the fee simple of Irish corruption,' had shaken this false system to its foundations, much remained to be done before a policy of honest economical finance could abolish jobbing.

In England the public officials were professional men, who discharged with diligence the business that they had obtained by merit. In Ireland they were

men of fortune, whose pride resented habits of application or obedience. The Barrack Board, where no contract could be obtained without payment, the Paving Board, the Board of Customs, the Board of Excise, the Board of Works, with a hundred other boards, were rendered inefficient by needy Irish peers and privy councillors.

Lord Hardwicke was hampered by the obligations inherited from his predecessors, for the Union had only been effected by paying off a powerful ring of jobbers. Innumerable peerages were created in order to carry the measure, and only one applicant seems to have possessed sufficient sense of shame to beg that his elevation might be postponed a few years in order that the payment for his services might appear less obvious. Vacant parliamentary seats were offered to Government with a request that at some future time the owners might be made representative peers, or granted a step in the peerage. The system extended through all classes. A perquisite was given by tenants to the squire's wife on the signing of their leases, and even the housemaids and the tailors acted by deputy, while their own positions became mere sinecures.

The prelates also found it hard to abstain from the universal practice of jobbery. When Bishop Whitehead refused to give his sons the preferments that were due to others, they begged the Lord Lieutenant to compensate them for the scrupulosity of their father.

In an article in the *Nineteenth Century* Lord Colchester maintains 'that to corrupt such a tribe of place-hunters was impossible, for they were incorruptible, and that the authorities were justified in using the only means of compelling dishonest men to vote for the good of their country.'

Though it would be impossible, and undesirable, to publish the begging letters from representatives of well-known Irish families preserved in Lord Colchester's collection, one or two quotations, without the names, will serve as specimens of the demands that led one of the Viceroy's secretaries to exclaim 'My whole business lies amongst beggars; and I am the man to perform the ungracious task of writing letters of refusal.'

The Bishop of M —— wrote that 'he did not wish to add to the number of importunate and greedy suitors that tease and worry,' but he expressed great mortification that his brother had not been appointed Landwaiter on the Quay of Dublin, and had received a place worth only 250*l.* a year.

Mr. Abbot answered:

'The Landwaiters and surveyors newly established are active and meritorious officers, chosen for their qualifications in the business to which they are allotted. Their daily duty is to attend upon the Quay from morning till night in all weathers, landing, gauging, and surveying (after the English fashion), but not according to what are generally understood to be the habits of a gentleman. I think your Lordship will not be surprised that no proposal of such drudgery was made to your brother. It is not His Excellency's intention that any future vacancies in these kind of offices should be given as sinecures, but that they shall be filled by *bona fide* labourers in their specific vocations.'

Mr. G. H. wrote from 15 Park Lane requesting that, owing to the ill-health of his wife, Lady Isabella H., he might be accommodated with a place, the duty of which was done by deputy and did not require residence in Ireland.

A certain peer hoped that his motives would not be

misunderstood, but he would take it as a particular favour if, in lieu of the pensions granted to his wife and daughter, he might be placed on the establishment for the entire sum, 1000*l.* a year, as he found an election in the English Parliament both expensive and troublesome.

Sir T. F. also found his parliamentary duties heavy, and while declining a clerkship in the Treasury for one of his younger sons, pointed out that, as India had been particularly fatal to his family, no appointment there would be acceptable.

Another man asked for a baronetcy and a deanery at the same time, and a third adopted the 'stand and deliver' manner, and begged that his appointment might be granted with as little delay as possible, after which he said he would trouble the authorities no further than to request them to nominate one of his family to the Board of Accounts.

In forwarding the following application, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Corry, wrote across it, 'I think I can't do justice to this business, so enclose this paper for the sake of all parties.' Certainly no transcript could have conveyed the spirit of the original. The writer was a judge who held a high legal appointment:

'I am pleased with the ease and responsibility of my judicial situation, but for domestic considerations, that make my wish a strong and prudent one, I should be glad of permission to leave off my official dignity, with my wig and robes, and carry about with me, for common use, the inferior and personal rank of a Baronet; more private, less unwieldy, and perhaps more gentlemanly, than the judicial title, but don't tell the Big Wigs.'

Another applicant desired to be appointed 'Gentleman at Large,' a post that was worth near 130*l.* a year. No wonder Lord Cornwallis had often 'longed to kick those whom his public duty obliged him to court.'

The Rev. B. Smith claimed compensation for the valuable service he had done to his country by inventing defensive armour to protect cavalry horses from the pikes of the adversary. He stated that four hundred 'Break o' Day Boys' and 'Defenders' were perpetually fighting pitched battles round his house, and though he had tried to preserve the politic attitude of the Vicar of Bray, when the 'White Boys' and the 'Heart of Steel Boys' joined the fray, he could no longer preserve his neutrality, and fled from the country with precipitation, in order to 'lay his head on his pillow unapprehensive of being assassinated before the morning.' His pride, he declared, would be wounded by returning as a beggar to the circle of acquaintances among whom he had enjoyed the superfluities of life. Misfortune he found was followed by lukewarm salutes of intimates, whose friendship was thus painfully put to the test. Also he 'had introduced to existence a parcel of children, whose incidental and not hereditary want of education would entail ignorance on the Smith family through many generations—for the Smiths had ever been respectable, and his own particular branch,' he adds with the true Irish touch, 'were much more so.' This sentiment was expressed after the manner of his compatriot, who declared that 'one man was as good as another, and a deal better too.'

After looking through a large number of similar petitions, it is pleasant to find one from a clergyman who begs to be allowed to exchange his living—which

only contained two Protestant families—for one where there would be more work.

Among all these applicants there were some who had real grievances. Mr. Gough, who had given up his half-pay on receiving a surveyor's appointment under Lord Townshend's administration, obtained leave of absence for two months on account of health. On his recovery he found that another surveyor had been appointed in the room of Mr. Gough deceased! For a period of twenty-one years, through the successive administrations of Lord Carlisle, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Westmorland, Lord Camden, and Lord Cornwallis, he in vain sought to prove that he was still alive. The fact was repeatedly certified, but Lord Auckland's 'death-warrant' and the load of unliquidated engagements made it impossible to make him amends. Lord Auckland admitted that Mr. Gough was a good sort of man, but 'his manner was *du genre larmoyant*' when he talked of his own supposed death. At last Mr. Abbot took the matter in hand, and wrote to Lord Auckland: 'I hope I have laid the ghost of the late Mr. Gough, who died an untimely death under your Lordship's hand. If grievances be good things, this gentleman has a chance of ending well in this world.'

Mr. Abbot's integrity and straightforward dealings did not of course suit wrongdoers, and until he was understood he appeared harsh, though this impression was soon dispelled by his constant good humour and politeness. But, as he wrote to Mr. Addington, his services and those of Lord Hardwicke 'could only be useful in the exact degree in which they were supported by H.M.'s Government.' An instance of the uncertain policy of the English Government is preserved in Lord Colchester's collection. In their desire to appear

impartial, the authorities unjustly condemned the upper classes, so as to satisfy the lower orders. In 1801 Sir Henry Hayes was sentenced to death at the Cork Assizes 'for carrying away Miss Mary Pike with intent to marry her.' The lady was on a visit to Mr. Penrose, when she was suddenly summoned to visit her mother, who it was alleged was ill. She had not proceeded far, when her carriage was stopped by armed men, who forcibly removed her to another chaise, in which she was hurried off to Sir Henry Hayes's place. In the avenue Sir Henry himself stopped the chaise, and getting off his horse, he handed Miss Pike out of the carriage, and the night being extremely dark and rainy, carried her to the house, where a priest immediately appeared, who began to mutter the marriage service, in which, however, Miss Pike declined to take her part. After the ring was forced upon her finger, she flung it away, and absolutely refused to marry Sir Henry Hayes. From the moment that he saw his cause was hopeless, he behaved with the utmost courtesy and consideration. He dispatched a letter from Miss Pike begging her friends to come to her immediately, and she was conveyed home at once without the smallest opposition. Such combined strength of purpose and chivalry would no doubt have appealed to the lady had no other attraction interposed, and all would have ended happily; but for this unsuccessful and rather rough attempt at persuasion, Sir Henry Hayes was condemned to die. The judge declared he was under the necessity of passing this severe sentence, as at the same assizes Thomas Murphy, a labourer, was tried for some brutal crime, and as the people would not understand the totally different circumstances of the case, it might have a mischievous effect on the public mind if there

appeared to be one law for the rich and another for the poor. So the same day of execution, September 7, was fixed for both. The subsequent commutation of Sir Henry's sentence to transportation to Botany Bay had to be equally extended to Murphy.

The overcrowded state of the gaols in 1801 caused the authorities to beg that the Government would transport as many convicts as possible, so as to make room for the persons committed for trial who might possibly prove to be innocent.

Throughout the year 1801 the fear of invasion was ever present, and in a secret memoir for the defence of Ireland, Sir George Shee stated that disaffection would abundantly furnish supplies for insurrection without reinforcements from the Continent. The country was so destitute of fortresses that the depots throughout the kingdom would fall into the enemy's or rebels' hands as soon as the forces that guarded them were required for service in the field. To command a capital without a citadel would be impracticable. An attempt, he adds, might as well be made to convert a thistle into a productive corn stem, as a real Irish Jacobin into a loyal subject, although in process of time, when the present generation shall have passed away, the prevailing national propensity may be changed by means of the Union, which is certainly one of the best measures that ever was carried, but it points more to remote than to immediate advantages.

On July 18 Mr. Abbot received the following warning from a friend well acquainted with France:

'You must look well about you, for my paper tells me this morning that the First Consul has sent back a flag of truce with the dispatches unopened, and that he will have no more negotiations with us for the present at least.'

A letter from Lord Nelson to Mr. Addington, however, brought relief.

'Medusa,' off Boulogne, Aug. 4, 1801.

'I think I may venture to assure you that the French Army will not embark at Boulogne for the invasion of England; they are suffering this morning, in consequence of allowing a collection of crafts to be assembled in their port, and vessels of different descriptions are sunk on the outside of the pier by our shells; they are all fitted with heavy guns and full of men; what damage has taken place inside the pier cannot be ascertained, but judging from the outside, we may suppose it considerable.'

The invaders would have received a hearty welcome had they reached the north of Ireland.

In the meanwhile everything was going from bad to worse in Dublin. Mr. Abbot's private secretary reported that the mob vented their last venom against the late Irish Chancellor, Lord Clare, by a prolonged cheer as his body was committed to the earth. He would himself perhaps have regarded with satisfaction this demonstration on the part of a people described in his will as the inhabitants of 'this distracted and giddy country,' whom, however, he faithfully endeavoured to serve.

There was no feeling of pity for Lady Clare, whose sorrow for her lord made her appear 'much worn down by affliction and the want of rouge.' The ladies of the period, in moments of anguish, when a desire to show a brave front to the world might alone have justified its use, discarded their paint.

Lord Clare's successor, Lord Kilwarden, was destined to be a yet more direct victim of popular fury. Mr. Abbot declared that he was beyond comparison the man

most fitted to succeed to the Great Seal, for he had filled the office of Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench with great honour to himself and satisfaction to all loyal subjects: 'His dignity of manners, learning and talents, and his excellent private character, and tried discretion placed him above all others that could be named.' He always inclined to mercy, and Mr. Abbot preserved a letter written by him in 1801, begging Lord Hardwicke to pardon a condemned criminal. His year of office closed tragically by his assassination on July 23, 1803, on which day a fresh insurrection broke out. Some days previously Lord Kilwarden had received information of an intended rising, and a letter written by him on the day before his death appeared almost prophetic. Had he known what was to be his fate, he could not have taken more solemn leave of, or breathed warmer prayers for, the friend to whom it was addressed.

Trouble had also broken out in the north, but with the rebellion of 1803 Bishop Percy was little concerned. His closing years were passed quietly at Dromore, where literature continued to engross his attention.

In his Sunday school the Bishop discovered a poetic genius named William Cunningham, aged eighteen, the son of a poor linen-weaver, who begged for the loan of books. Under Dr. Percy's direction he studied the classics, and afterwards became assistant teacher in Dr. Bruce's Academy at Belfast.

This poet so strongly resembled Dr. Goldsmith in face, that when Percy compared his profile with the portrait of his early friend, it seemed as if it might have been his. His career was cut short by consumption early in 1804.

Bishop Percy accepted the office of President of the Irish Harp Society, that was formed to promote

the knowledge of the Irish language and antiquities, and to collect ancient Irish music.

He also subscribed a hundred guineas to the Academical Institution of Belfast, of which he was one of the visitors. He added to the library, and established a Botanical Garden, and a Museum, to which 'every part of the creation might contribute,' and founded a department for the study of agriculture. Through the recommendation of Dr. Anderson, Bishop Percy procured for the institution the services of such professors as Dr. John Irving, a Writer to the Signet, who was, from school days, the intimate friend and companion of Sir Walter Scott. As boys they agreed to compose romances for each other's amusement, and rehearsed them during their walks about Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. Scott and Irving would climb to inaccessible places, and there, sheltered from the wind, read together 'The Castle of Otranto,' Spenser, Ariosto, and Boiardo. After two or three years Scott proposed that they should recite to each other, alternately, adventures of knight-errants of their own imagination. They learned Italian, and Scott wrote down many of the ballads recited by Irving's mother, which are still preserved in a collection of six little volumes at Abbotsford.

Bishop Percy also encouraged the art of painting. The local artist, Robinson, who was the pupil of Romney, had much improved in his flesh colours, having 'got rid of his pallid, chalky tinctures,' so Dr. Percy entrusted him to add a new face to one of his own portraits. Robinson's masterpiece, a fine picture of the Giant's Causeway, was disposed of by means of a raffle, which was won by the Bishop's grandson, Ambrose Isted, and now adorns an obscure corner of

the back staircase at Ecton. This event was announced by Dr. Percy in the following letter to his daughter, Mrs. Isted, written on Sunday, June 13, 1808.

'Dromore House.

'My dearest Mrs. Isted,—Mr. Robinson's fine Picture of the Giant's Causeway has been raffled for. There were 100 subscribers at 1 Guinea each. Who do you think has won this picture, valued at 100 Guineas?—Your son Ambrose Isted! ! ! ! !

'The cast thrown for him was 49—two points higher than the highest besides. His cast was thrown by a gentleman who betted 10 guineas that his number would not be exceeded, so that he has had that reward for throwing. As this is the first venture ever made for the dear little fellow, I hope it will prove a happy omen, and he will be equally successful in all his chances thro' life.'

CHAPTER XIV

1808-1811

THOUGH no man had employed his eyesight to better purpose than Bishop Percy, he had all his life been in danger of losing it. In the summer of 1803 he was lying in a darkened room, deprived of the sight of one eye and threatened with the loss of the other. The following year he tried the effect of electricity, and mentions some *Metallic Tractors*, which were 'much cried up in the papers,' though 'as a gentle conveyance of the electric treatment and a cure for rheumatic pains and sleeplessness' he believed that the following method would 'operate' as well.

'Take a common quart-bottle, clean, and fill it with a good quantity of broken glass, pounded almost to powder, warm it thoroughly at the fire, then rub the painful part for half an hour, twice a day, with the smooth warm bottle.'

The loss of his eyesight was but one of the calamities that made Bishop Percy, who had hitherto enjoyed as large a share of prosperity as most men, now solitary and sorrowful.

In 1806 he experienced the greatest trial of his declining years. Though he was the product of an artificial age, if there was one thing genuine about him, after his love of antiquarian pursuits, it was his devotion to his wife. But he had reacned the day when, like the prophet, 'his strength,' and 'the desire of his eyes,' and 'that upon which he had set his

mind' were taken from him by a stroke, for of his closing days he might also have added, 'And in the evening my wife died.'

In a letter of sympathy Dr. Anderson wrote:

'Our lights go out one by one, and happy it is for us that they thus steal away. The time will at length arrive when all our earthly props must shake, and when nothing that is not built on an immortal base will endure. This event,' he added, 'good men are prepared to meet with composure, and the prospect of it does not meanwhile destroy their enjoyment of rational pleasures.'

The Bishop's fortitude was wonderful under both calamities.

Echoing the note that Percy himself had struck in his ballad of 'Nancy,' in which he claimed that his wife was 'fairest of the fair,' the local poet, young Romney Robinson, thus commemorated Mrs. Percy's gift of warm clothing to the Dromore Yeomanry:

> In vain the Tyrant marks our Isle,
> In vain in air his banner streams;
> If Beauty pleased benignant smile,
> We scorn his power, we scorn his schemes.

'Hafiz,' also following Percy's lead, insists on picturing 'Nancy's' earlier days to have been passed at Court, though when Percy wrote his ballad the allusion was rather prophetic than retrospective.

> Within the precincts of this silent cell
> Distinguish'd Percy's sacred Relics dwell;
> Whose youthful charms adorn'd the courtly scene,
> And won the favour of a British Queen:
> Whose moral excellence, and virtues rare,
> Shone as conspicuous as her face was fair.
> By none, throughout a long and happy life,
> Was she surpass'd as Mother, Friend, or Wife.

In 1808, two years after the death of Mrs. Percy, the Bishop lost his nephew, 'the heir to both his names,' to whom he always referred with pride as Dr. Thomas Percy. In his desire to make him his literary successor, he had allowed him to edit a fourth edition of 'The Reliques' in 1794, but 'poor Tom,' he said regretfully, 'never thinks about the main chance, and lays himself and his friends under obligations to innumerable people for a mere feather.' This 'last male heir of the Percy family' died unmarried at the age of 40. His death took place at Ecton.

Owing to his friendship with Dr. Anderson, formerly physician at Alnwick, we are able to get some knowledge of Bishop Percy's closing years. Robert Anderson was born in 1750, and after his retirement from the medical profession in 1784, his house in Edinburgh, till his death in 1830, became a centre for literary men. He wrote 'The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain,' including Chaucer, Surrey, Wyatt, and Sackville, and Southey thanked him in the *Quarterly* for 'making many Elizabethan poets generally accessible for the first time.' For a time he edited the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and among the young men of talent whom he encouraged was Thomas Campbell, for whose 'Pleasures of Hope' he procured a publisher. The volume in which that poem first appeared was, consequently, gratefully dedicated to him. Having these pursuits and tastes in common, a strong friendship was maintained between Dr. Percy and himself, and the last years of the Bishop's life were happily occupied in helping him to prepare a new edition of the poems of his early friend, James Grainger, who had left all his poetical writings in Percy's hands, declaring that he would 'rather not be talked about hereafter, than talked of as an indifferent

poet.' This joint work, which was carried on with 'slow haste,' though finished before the Bishop's death did not appear till 1836, after Anderson himself had also passed away.

When it was possible for Anderson to 'exchange the air of Auld Reekie for that of Downshire,' he attended his host in his daily walks through the groves and glens with which he had ornamented the grounds round Dromore House. The old man could no longer enjoy their beauty, but his step remained as firm and light as of old. The lake that he had made, with its mimic torrents and cascades, filled the visitor with 'pleasing astonishment,' while the waterfowl flocked to take their food from the master's hand. The trees which he had planted already threw deeper shades round the 'seats consecrated to friendship,' and the woodlands, lawns, and meadows were for ever associated in Anderson's mind with his instructive conversation and unwearied personal kindness.

In the Bishop's library, rich in the poetic antiquities of many nations, they conversed on all matters connected with ancient and modern poetry, and there Anderson met all the literary men that Dr. Percy had contrived to gather round him—Dr. Campbell of Newry, Lloyd, Ledwich, Sir Richard Musgrave, Walker, and Henry Boyd.

After his return to Edinburgh, Dr. Anderson would entertain the Bishop with accounts of his wanderings in 'the Land of Song,' and his visits to Lord Buchan at Dryburgh Abbey, where he had inspected his literary and antiquarian collection; or he would tell how he was drawn away into Roxburghshire, and from Tweedside made an excursion into the mountainous districts of Teviotdale, Eskdale, and Cumberland. Percy was thus

(in imagination) enabled to revisit the scenery of the Border ballads and the ancient castles of the Border chiefs, the dens of thieves and robbers. Anderson adds :

'I sat on the ruins of the Hermitage, but saw neither Redcap nor Shellycoat; for the creatures of popular superstition no longer haunt these peaceful valleys—though nothing can exceed the romantic aspect of the country.'

Through Dr. Anderson's recommendation, Bishop Percy sent ten guineas to a young crippled poet, named William Wight, at Ednam, and the same to Miss Bannerman, a poor Scotch poetess. Anderson also gave a young American traveller a letter of introduction to Dromore House, a few months before Percy's death, so that he might carry back to the United States a pleasing account of the venerable Prelate and Poet.

Anderson supplied the Bishop with literary gossip, and wrote :

'Scott's "Marmion" is come out. It is a work of more promise than performance ; it does not rise above and often falls below the "Lay." It is censured severely in the *Critical Review* and even in the *Edinburgh*, though more handsomely.'

To the last Bishop Percy's mind was still vigorous, and as age increased so did his taste for literary pursuits. Every subject interested him, whether it was the migration of the swallows and the cuckoos, a controversy respecting 'the fall of stones from the clouds,' or the establishment of the fact of round towers being originally built as belfries. He also added some 'touches of his pen' to a comic opera, 'The Bedouins,' and wrote against the unqualified manner in which Dr. Scully had asserted the universal success of vaccination.

Although he would not allow himself to be dragged into a controversy on the subject, he declared that it had failed in several instances in his own diocese. He could remember the time when, in the middle of the eighteenth century, inoculation had been considered so presumptuous an innovation that one of its pioneers, Mr. Cradock, who had paid 100*l.* to have his child inoculated, could scarce venture in safety from his house for the fury of the mob.

Bishop Percy never lost his love for genealogies, and dictated the following letter a few months before his death, that shows he was himself amused by his own characteristic weakness:

'Mrs. West has doubtless been secretly diverted with the Bishop's fondness for genealogical researches. She will not therefore be surprised if he is not a little proud that his grandchildren (the Meades) are lineally descended from that great statesman and historian, Edward, Earl of Clarendon.'

During the last five years of Bishop Percy's life he was totally blind. His once hot temper was subdued, and he bore his trials with meekness and resignation. He continued to stroll down daily to the pond in the Palace Gardens to feed his swans, who came at the sound of his voice. He remained, as ever, fond of children, and treated them with great gentleness.

In former years Thomas Percy had confided to Dr. Johnson that, added to the ordinary unwillingness to part with life, he felt 'an uneasiness at the thoughts of leaving his house, his study, and his books.' 'This is foolish,' replied Dr. Johnson, 'a man need not be uneasy on these grounds; for as he will retain his consciousness, he may say with the Greek sage, Bias, "I can carry everything with me."' 'True, sir,' broke

in the irrepressible Boswell, 'we may carry our books in our heads,' adding that when oppressed by the thought of a future state, where Shakespeare's poetry would not be known, he had himself been cheered by the suggestion of a fair lady that the first thing which would probably greet him in the other world would be a presentation copy of that poet's works.

Bishop Percy died very suddenly on September 30, 1811, in the eighty-third year of his age. The tablet to his memory in the Cathedral at Dromore testifies that 'he resided constantly in his diocese during the thirty years of his episcopate, discharging his duties with vigilance and zeal, instructing the ignorant, relieving the necessitous, and comforting the distressed. He was revered for his piety and learning, and beloved for his universal benevolence by all religious denominations'; his wife was 'the worthy partner of such a husband.'

Above this epitaph is a mitre surmounting a Bible, and a pastoral staff upon a cushion. Beneath are the arms of the see of Dromore, and also the lion rampant of the House of Percy.

> As a prelate exemplary, dignified, zealous,
> He faithfully practis'd the duties assigned;
> Of the fortune or fame of another ne'er jealous,
> He enjoyed that prime blessing—contentment of mind.

So sang one of the Dromore poets.

Regent Bridge over the river Lagan was built in the thirtieth year of Bishop Percy's episcopate, and bears an inscription as a memorial of respect by the inhabitants of the town of Dromore, A.D. 1811. There is also near the town, between the Dublin Road and the River Lagan, a handsome monument to his memory, erected by Thomas Stott.

Dr. Percy and his wife are buried under the transept known as Percy's Aisle, which was added to the cathedral during his episcopate.

Sir Walter Scott warns us that biography loses all its interest when the lights and shades of a character are not faithfully drawn, and declares that a mere eulogist is like a ranting hero on the stage. Eulogy is at all events unnecessary in the case of a man to whom the whole world of literature is under an immeasurable obligation, and who contributed so greatly to raise his fellow-men, 'for,' said Dr. Johnson, 'whatever withdraws us from the power of the senses, and makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, exalts us in the scale of rational beings.'

As the friend of Shenstone and Goldsmith, as the last survivor of the Club founded by Johnson and Reynolds, and of the brilliant society in which Burke and Garrick shone, or as the poetic antiquary, who with Warton and Tyrwhitt revived our ancient folk-lore, the autobiography of such a man as Thomas Percy would have formed a most interesting addition to our literary history. But alas! he failed to add the part of Samuel Pepys to his other accomplishments. Dibdin, while regretting our loss, remarks that 'we must take men as they are,' and adds that 'there is already more than enough in the character of Bishop Percy to make him an object of reverence and respect.' Possibly the present slight attempt to collect some of the records of his eventful life may induce others to do his memory more ample justice.

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